

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

Vol. XLVII

January, 1986

ISSN 0025-9357

No. 1

Vietnam of the Sixties

Recently Doug Hostetter donated to the Archives of the Mennonite Church his collection of journals, correspondence, artifacts and data that reflect one Mennonite's interpretation of the Vietnam experience. Hostetter grew up in the Shenandoah Valley and attended Eastern Mennonite College, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Immediately following his graduation from EMC in 1966, he served in South Vietnam with the Mennonite Central Committee until 1969. The Doug Hostetter collection covers the period from 1966 to 1969 when he worked in Vietnam, and his later involvement with the U.S.-Vietnam peace movement from 1969 on.

In his letters and journal entries written while in Vietnam, Doug Hostetter describes the conflicts and struggles of the Mennonite encounter with the war-torn world of Vietnam. The Vietnam experience brought with it many new questions—how does a Mennonite deal with violence, the political order, different faiths, different cultures, different philosophies? How does a Menno-

nite respond to war? Is there room for an honest, Christian perspective? Is neutrality possible for a North American Mennonite?

Questions also faced those who experienced the Vietnam War indirectly. Can one join a secular movement that at times reflects a youthful search for self-fulfillment rather than a genuine desire for peace? How does the church continue to witness to the God of Peace?

Hostetter arrived in Saigon on July 4, 1966. He spent the first weeks there in language study and then, at the request of the Mennonite Central Committee, traveled to other areas of South Vietnam to check out the feasibility of new projects.

On September 20, 1966, Hostetter moved to Tam Ky (South Vietnam) to open a new MCC unit. Tam Ky at that time was located in an area that was less secure, militarily, than most other MCC locations in Vietnam. Doug soon had to face what that meant. As an American he was at first mistrusted; as a Christian he was concerned about a proper witness. He wanted neither

to be identified with the American army and American-backed South Vietnamese army (ARVN), nor to be connected with the Viet Cong (V.C.), sometimes called the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. In any case, Doug found himself in a situation that called for immediate assessment, with no easy answers.

Tam Ky, November 23, 1966
Dear Folks,

. . . The war and its struggle are very real here. Pray that my presence will not add to the conflict but help to heal it. I am the only American in the town outside of the guarded compound. I hope I am not endangering the family I am staying with.

I have done some serious thinking and talking about peace and war in the last two months and have made some decisions just this last week. I have decided that since I worship a God who is bigger than national or ideological boundaries I will stay here working even if we are overrun by V.C. I am telling the military that they shouldn't feel responsible and I won't run if security deteriorates. This is not a hurriedly made, rash decision but has been made over two months of talking, thinking and studying—as far as I'm concerned, it is the only Christian possibility. Of course I will continue to try to be sensitive to the leading of the spirit in all situations. I have much peace and freedom because of my decision. I think I am finding the meaning of Luke 9:23 and 24 at least for this situation. My life and future are now in God's hands and I will consider whatever happens as His will. This frees me to live a sane and happy life where most military men are pulling out their hair. . . .

My work right now is mostly just living. I am trying to fix up two rooms downstairs (now being used for storage) to make them livable. I have to start from scratch—buy beds, closets, tables, chairs, etc. . . . I am also trying to get the community used



Doug Hostetter in Tam Ky with his literacy class students (AMC, MCC Photograph Collection).

to seeing an American civilian walking around the town.

In about two weeks, I will likely have another guy working here. By that time I am to be settled and know a few of the community needs. . . .

Pray for me in this new experiment in faith and the power of love. . . . In a situation like this I think the church is challenged to put into practice all it has talked about for so long.

Love, Doug

Tam Ky, November 26, 1966

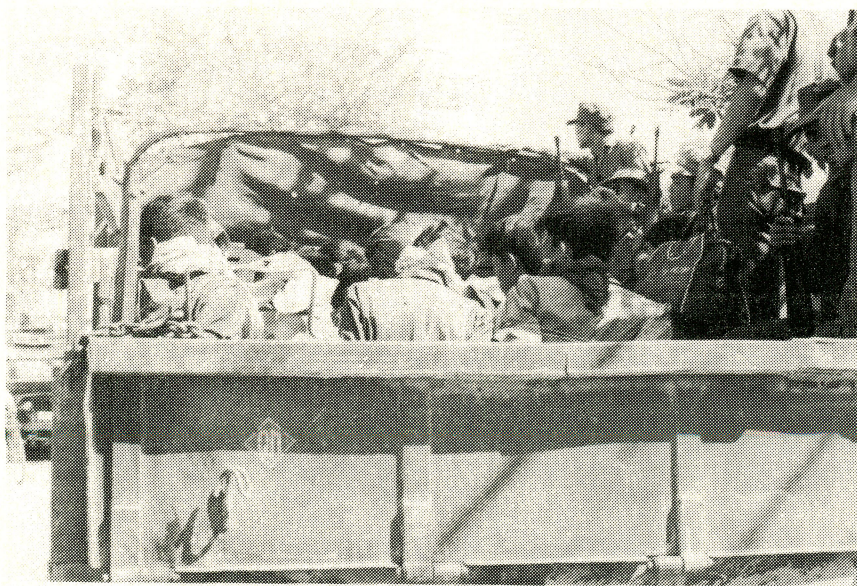
Dear Family,

. . . For one week now I have been living with the Mr. Chau family here in Tam Ky. I am here on a semi-permanent basis. I am to start the groundwork for the unit which will be drifting in over the next two months. . . .

I am considering my most important job here to be learning to know the people and letting them know me.

. . . I feel like I am at least partially accomplishing my job because now at least some of the people are saying *Anh Duck* (they can't pronounce Doug) instead of just *Om me* (Mr. American)—in fact one of the little boys that lives in the cafeteria where I eat is already claiming to be my son! When you consider that no American has ever lived in Tam Ky outside of a guarded compound, I think I'm making progress.

I wish you could live here for just a couple of days so that you could get the feeling of a country at war. Here the war is more of a reality than anywhere else I've been [in Vietnam]. It has tendencies to turn one cynical. Thanksgiving Day I was awakened around 5:45 by an explosion which rocked the house—only a bomb dropped too close to the city or a mortar which went off course. The bombing continued all day, off and on. I watched as two million dollar planes and a quarter million dollar helicopter moved in to give their Thanksgiving gift to the people in a hamlet which couldn't have been worth over one hundred thousand dollars all together. They donated



"Viet Cong" captives being transported in an Army of the Republic of Vietnam truck (AMC, MCC Photograph Collection).

their bit of hell and returned to thank God in some military chapel for all his material blessings and health! . . .

Must we compromise with hypocrisy in order to get a job done easily? Is the day of the prophets and Christ over, where God's message cuts across culturally accepted practices and exposes the hypocrisy of the pious leaders of the religious and social communities? . . . Is there still room in the church for people like me? Or must I leave the religious community in order to live an honest life? Can I identify with the Christian name when they are fighting this as a holy war against the atheist communist? . . . Please write soon.

A Church World Service worker, Bill Herod, joined Doug in Tam Ky. Later, June Sauder and Anne Falk also became part of the unit.

Tam Ky, January 18, 1967

Dear Folks,

. . . Most of my time this last week has been taken up in moving from the Chaus and trying to get settled in our new locations. One of us

(Bill [Herod], most of the time) will live in the room we fixed up at the Duc Tri High School compound. The priest gave us a large room which had formerly housed an administrative office. The room is nice, but small, and too close to too many kids for any privacy. The fact that it has no electricity, with the closest water forty yards, and the john, eighty yards away, add to the inconvenience.

The house where the two girls—June Sauder and Anne Falk—will stay is out on the very western edge of town and just beside the ammunition dump. I have fixed up a room in the servants' quarters behind the house where I will usually stay.

This house is large and beautiful—complete with large lawn, running water (if you pump it up to the reservoir), bathroom and shower. It has the disadvantage of being in insecure territory, far from town, far from neighbors and close to the ammunition dump. I discovered the disadvantages of this last night. I was trying to come home last night about 8:00. It was raining. I was on a bike so I was soaked to the skin. I was

The *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is published quarterly by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church and distributed to the members of the Mennonite Historical Association. **Editor:** Leonard Gross; **Book Review Editor:** Gerald C. Studer; **Office Editor:** Rachel Shenk; **Production and Design:** Carl Lind; **Associate Editors:** Rafael Falcón, Jan Gleysteen, Merle Good, Amos B. Hoover, Albert N. Keim, James O. Lehman, James Mininger, Winifred Paul, Lorraine Roth, Shirley Showalter, Wilmer Swope, and J. C. Wenger. Dues for regular membership (\$5), contributing membership (\$10-25), supporting membership (\$50), sustaining membership (\$100-250), and sponsoring membership (\$500 and above) per year may be sent to the editor. (Library rate: \$5 per year.) Articles and news items should be addressed to the editor, 1700 S. Main Street, Goshen, Indiana 46526 (Tel. 219/533-3161, Ext. 477).

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*. Microfilms of Volumes I-XLIV of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from: University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

about a half mile from the house when firing broke out between the guards at the ammunition dump and the Viet Cong. I had to ditch my bike and head for cover as bullets sung overhead. Although the fighting came quite close, I really had no fear. Anxiety, yes, and realization that death might be near, but my head remained clear and calm. I am sure that I am where God wants me, and doing approximately what He has in mind—the rest is God's responsibility. I spent last night with Bill at his room at Duc Tri High School but tonight I am back out at my room. Tomorrow, the girls should be arriving. . . .

Tam Ky, February 15, 1967
Dear Folks,
. . . So much has happened in Tam Ky since I wrote last that I can never hope to get it all on paper—and

most of it defies description.

All along we had been warned that there would likely be a pre-Tet drive by the V.C. USAID [United States Agency for International Development] had installed a new machine gun on their roof and placed more concertina in front of their wall. Our house—200 yards away and just as close to the V.C. territory—has no guards or even a wall! We believe that if we claim to love both sides, no protection may be our best witness and perhaps our best protection.

On Sunday night (2/5/67) we had had a very good devotion with Paul Longacre who had stopped in to visit the unit for the weekend. At about 10:30, Bill and I decided to go back to the Duc Tri High School compound for the night. I gave my bed to Paul. The sky to the west was lit by flares and bombing five to ten miles out. I took my camera to the roof and took

pictures of the falling flares, wondering how the people under them felt. At 11:00 we went back to the high school to go to bed. At 1:00 a.m. Tam Ky was hit by the largest V.C. attack in many years. In the next 45 minutes of hell, thirty-one Vietnamese and one American were killed. The Americans were the main target. In the second mortar blast, a soldier at the MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] compound was killed. Mortars hit the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] house at the other end of town and destroyed both of their vehicles and USAID (200 yards away from the house where the girls and Paul were) was hit by eight rounds of recoilless rifle fire. Large holes were knocked in the wall around the house, a large hole knocked in their living room wall and one of the roof bunkers almost completely destroyed. Machine gun and small arms fire sounded like a string of firecrackers being lit, while tracer bullets raked the air with their fine-toothed comb of death. And about thirty mortar shells were lobbed at random throughout the town.

Bill and I, in the middle of the town, just watched and prayed because we realized that our house stood undefended in an area of heavy fire. The whole time our house took not one round of V.C. fire and there was nothing between us and the line of trees where the attack was from.

. . . .
About 4:00 a.m., USAID came over and evacuated Paul and the two girls to the USAID house (two hours after the fighting stopped!). They had just gotten back to the house when Bill and I stopped in to check on them the next morning. The girls were a bit shaken up by the whole thing, but seemed in pretty good shape. Paul suggested that they go to Quang Ngai that night since it would be only a couple of days early for the Dalat [MCC] Conference.

They left, but Bill and I stayed to help some of our less fortunate neighbors. One of our neighbors was killed and her husband wounded when their house took a direct hit from a recoilless rifle. Another neighbor, a widow, living with her daughter, lost everything she owned when her house took a direct hit from a mortar shell. . . .

Yes, we are trying to get God involved right down to the middle of



An everyday scene of war in Vietnam (AMC, MCC Photograph Collection).

the suffering which surrounds war. We ourselves are getting much better understanding of the forces which influence these people and their lives.

... Please don't pity me here in Tam Ky. . . . I, like most of the Vietnamese people, have learned to live in the "eternal now." I savor the present of all the joys and sorrows that it has to offer but I neither look back on the past nor am anxious for the future. Mat. 6:25-34 has really come to life and makes some sense. . . .

After the February attack, the two women were transferred to another unit while Doug and Bill remained in Tam Ky for the length of their terms. Doug developed a bamboo cooperative and a literacy program. He was also involved in various community development projects: working with sewing classes, organizing projects for youth, working with refugees.

Tam Ky, April 6, 1967

Dear Folks,

... To make a long story short—I was in V.C. territory and accidentally discovered some camouflaged fox holes and a mortar pit that were recently dug. They were dug in directly across from the ammunition dump and less than 300 yards away from our own house. Aside from the fact that a woman saw me there and likely told the V.C. I was spying, I was faced with an impossible moral question: report it and get the V.C. killed, or don't report it and let the ci-

ty and ammunition dump suffer. . . . I didn't report it, feeling it would violate my neutrality. . . . Thanks for listening. . . .

Tam Ky, May 14, 1967

Dear Folks,

... The girls will not be returning to Tam Ky. Security has not improved and shows no sign of change in the near future. Last night, the marines in town were mortared again and the V.C. entered town and mined four more houses. The next day three more of Tam Ky's citizens were carried out—in long red narrow boxes. . . .

I wish you could share, with me, the feelings I have gone through this p.m. When I came home I was so repulsed by what I had seen I felt like saying every bad and filthy or vile word I could think of—I felt so filthy inside I'm sure I could have spit bile. I had gone down to check on how the two sewing machines were that I had given to the Ly Tra [Refugee] Camp after the V.C. had burnt it the week before last. I was sitting in the tailor's home at the edge of the now blackened camp, drinking tea and talking when there was a terrible commotion outside—a refugee had just been shot and killed by a Vietnamese guard. His wife had gone out of her mind in grief. My heart was torn to shreds and ground into the bloody, sandy ground by his body. I finally couldn't stand to see the widow's grief any longer. I left. . . .

God, are these creatures really created in your image? Do you know what they are doing? . . .

I was invited to supper at a Buddhist pagoda by the monk. You may find it hard to believe but we had real communion of souls. It is funny how God shows up at some of the most peculiar places and seems to be utterly lacking in some of the places where we expect to find him. In a foreign country with a language barrier, somehow doctrine and theology seem unimportant while actions and communications of the spirit seem to shine forth. Perhaps this helps to explain "other sheep have I that are not of this fold". . . .

Tam Ky, May 1967

Dear Folks,

... During the summer there is plenty to keep one busy—the roads are open and kids are free. I travel a good bit just keeping our projects

going. We now have going a bamboo crafts project which turns out vases and tumblers made of bamboo, the literacy school for kids, a new sewing class (incidentally, which Bill or I teach), and a sewing project for the burned-out camp. In the next couple of weeks I will be traveling out to some of the mountain villages that are accessible only by helicopter to see about new projects. . . .

For the Mennonite Central Committee workers in Vietnam, it was a difficult path to walk. At this time, MCC was working together with Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief under the name of Vietnam Christian Service (VNCS). Though MCC administered the program, some compromises were inevitable. VNCS objectives stated that "the program stresses the importance of identification with the Vietnamese people. This involves a basic orientation toward those we seek to serve. This also suggests a deliberate choice to be apart from political or military causes and associations and stresses our one world orientation." But for the VNCS American national faced with gunfire, the U.S. Government posts provided safety and cultural similarities to home.

The MCC favored a moderate position—to be neutral, and to attempt a Christian witness. But some of the workers felt that one must also speak out against the powers, and play a more active role. A parallel situation of course also was developing back in the United States.

Tam Ky, July 9, 1967

Dear Folks,

... Things with USAID have gotten worse. Colonel Bryerton, USAID province representative, now feels that I'm likely a V.C. spy. After all, I don't support the U.S. position on the war. (Some people can see only black and white.) He is trying to get me kicked out of the country. He has no authority over me; but being a colonel, he may have pull in many places. Pray that God will take control of the situation. I would really hate to leave the country now but would rather do that than support the U.S. war here. Don't worry. I'm sure things are in God's hands. . . .

Tam Ky, August 5, 1967

Dear Folks,

... This week has been a good one, but a terribly busy one. Jerry Akker, the new program director, came up, or rather stopped in from another trip to investigate the rumor



Anne Falk, left, worked as a nurse in Tam Ky (AMC, MCC Photograph Collection).

that USAID was trying to get me kicked out. So I had to go through the whole business of trying to justify myself in the eyes of men again.

I really appreciated Jerry's attitude. He is not a pacifist or a Mennonite so I'm sure that he would have good reason to condemn me. He did bring home one rather startling fact. My views on a peace witness and an impartial Christian witness to all parties involved in this conflict are now a minority in VNCS [Vietnam Christian Service]. Could it be that a Mennonite who really believes in a peace witness will have to join the Quakers to do so? The Quakers have taken a strong stand on peace in Vietnam while the Mennonites are drifting into a nice comfortable USAID-type of witness. And now they want to make sure that we come into no conflict with USAID. It looks like VNCS will try to transfer me before USAID can go through the red tape of getting me kicked out—which means I likely have less than two months in Tam Ky. This may be best but where does a Christian organization draw the line on allowing others to dictate what kind of "good news" they can bring? At some point I am afraid that we just become an instrument of the state.

Saigon, September 5, 1967

Dear Folks,

Well, yesterday was the day that Paul said he would come to a final decision. And he did: I lost. I will be returning to Tam Ky for one week and then coming to Saigon. From there I have to pretty well find my job, likely in Saigon or Dac To (Mountain tribes).

Saigon, September 26, 1967

Dear Folks,

Many things have happened in this week here in Saigon. To make a long story short, it looks like I will be going back to Tam Ky tomorrow morning. . . . I am sure that I would not be returning so fast if it weren't for the emergency situation at Tam Ky. We got a cable on Saturday saying that Bill was quite sick, and it was felt that likely he had hepatitis. Request was made to medically evacuate him to Chu Lai or Danang. . . .

I will need your continual prayer support as I go back and try to pick up our projects in Tam Ky. . . .



Robert Miller and Paul Longacre of MCC make a field investigation in Vietnam (AMC, MCC Photograph Collection).

Tam Ky, October 10, 1967

Dear Folks,

. . . I am working the hardest that I have ever worked since I've come to Vietnam. A couple of days it has been "go," straight through from 7:00 a.m. to 8, or last night, 9:00 p.m. Our flood last weekend was really a welcome rest. It rained straight through from Saturday p.m. till Monday a.m. It was great, a good excuse to skip church and stay home. It was so relaxing because it brought privacy, a very precious item in Vietnam. I had practically no visitors all day. God was even able to stop the war for awhile: no planes—the typhoon winds were too strong—no convoys and very little shooting. Monday, there was no school since the town was divided by a river of water 100 yards wide. Monday morning I went out and waded around in the refugee camp to see if I could be of any help. Most of the homes had about a foot of water in them but no one seemed to be too upset; they just used it as an excuse to houseclean their house and wash down all the house and furniture.

Tonight Tam Ky is beautiful and peaceful. It is really kind of great to go out at night because at night I own the whole town. The G.I.s and CIA may use it during the day, but at night, it is their enemy. But for me it is my friend both day and night.

. . .

Tam Ky, November 15, 1967

Dear Folks,

. . . There have been V.C. in town or on the edge of town almost every night this week. One of my best bamboo workers was wounded two nights ago in a battle at the edge of town which left four V.C. dead (kids in their late teens or early twenties—three guys and a girl) and one government soldier killed and one captured. . . .

Tam Ky, January 31, 1968

Dear Folks,

. . . Tam Ky is now undergoing one of the most trying periods in its history. The Saigon Government called off the Tet truce for our area before it began (not because of V.C. violations). This is the first time as far as anyone here can remember that there has not been a truce over Tet in either the French or American wars. . . . The breaking of the truce just took the spirit out of Tet. It is hard to celebrate the coming of the new year while bombers are bombing the countryside around the city. In spite of everything, the first day of the new year was fairly enjoyable with everyone out in new clothes visiting their friends. The second day of the "year of the monkey" has been quite different. The V.C. infiltrated Tam Ky this morning about 4:30 a.m. They organized some of the people into demonstrations on Main Street,

but most of their activities were more violent. There was street fighting, artillery and bombing all morning. This place really sounded bad—worse than Dodge City. We could hear the V.C. shouting anti-U.S. slogans from our bedroom. For the first time since I've come to Tam Ky, the V.C. didn't break contact at dawn. It is now 11:00 in the morning and we are still under martial law and not allowed on the streets. The V.C. are still in control of some areas. With the coming of dawn, the U.S. brought their planes to the city. Dragon ships circled the city excreting their stream of deadly bullets upon the V.C. positions. Sky raiders were divebombing and strafing around the edge of town. There were Phantom jets divebombing just west of Tam Ky and the air is still full of helicopter gun ships. . . .

February 3, 1968

Immediately after I stopped writing the last part of the letter I had started on the first of February, I decided to walk to the church and see how the protestant youth were faring. On the way, a friend, an ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] soldier stopped and asked me to come to his home just outside of town to celebrate Tet. I asked if the fighting had stopped in that area, and he replied that it had, so I went. The road outside of town was littered with the bodies of "V.C." from the ages of four to seventy. They had been in an anti-government, anti-war demonstration that morning and the government troops had been given orders to fire on them. They were armed only with bamboo walking sticks. . . .

Tam Ky, February 25, 1968

Dear Folks,

. . . Things are kind of hairy around Tam Ky at this time. The night before last was the worst night I have ever spent. At about one o'clock I was rudely awakened by the sound of machine guns outside my window. Almost by reflex, I hit the floor only to discover that I had forgotten to clear the floor beside my bed to prepare for such events. I spent the next fifteen minutes trying to silently extract my shoes, slippers, truck jack and wrench from underneath me. By 2:00, the V.C. must have felt that they had the area "pacified" because

they started going from house to house knocking on doors and questioning the occupants. Believe me, I have never been so scared in my life. About three or four V.C. came up to the house right behind my room (like 20 feet away). They marched up to the door and boldly demanded that they open the door. You cannot imagine the psychological effect it has on people to have someone in the middle of the night, when guns are still firing and everyone is trying to be as quiet as possible, to have someone come up and in a loud, firm voice demand that you open the door. I had always imagined how I would answer the V.C. if they ever came to my room, how I would calmly explain in perfect Vietnamese what I was doing and why I was here. Well, when I heard them next door, my knees and arms were shaking uncontrollably and my stomach was doing flips. I don't think I could have even spoken a word of Vietnamese if I had been spoken to. The V.C. entered the house behind my room. The family wasn't in a very good position to refuse entrance to anyone since they had only a bamboo and thatch house. I could plainly hear every word that the V.C. said even after they had entered the house. They demanded that they light the lamp, and then questioned them about whether they had any soldiers in the family (answer "no") and if they knew who had been shooting at them when they first moved into our community an hour earlier. The answer to that was also "no." After that I couldn't hear them anymore. I didn't know if they had holed up in that home and were planning to hold this area of town, or if they had moved on. There was still fighting and mortaring going on in other parts of town until 5:00. About 4:00 I decided that it was safe enough for me to slip back into bed. I slept fitfully until about 6:30. . . .

I love and miss you all, Doug

Tam Ky, November 24, 1968

. . . I stopped in at the reception center today and there were about 200 new refugees from Hiep Duc. They told how all of their rice had been killed by airplanes that dropped poison from the sky and how their homes had been destroyed by bombs and artillery. One old man with a wispy beard got all excited when he

heard me talking in Vietnamese. He said "I wish the Americans on operations were like him, they come up and say 'you V.C.?' and I don't know what they are saying and they don't understand me. Mr. American, what is V.C.?" . . .

Phnom Penh, June 10, 1969

. . . I have just left Vietnam—but in a real way Vietnam is still with me and very much a part of me. I think it will be a long time before my spirit leaves Vietnam. . . .

Doug returned to the United States in June 1969. His Vietnam experiences continued, however, in 1970, 1974, and after the war in 1980 when he returned to Vietnam, on behalf of MCC and other peace groups. Since the time of his term in Vietnam, Doug has continued his involvement in peace and justice issues. He currently works as Executive Secretary for the New England Regional Office of the American Friends Service Committee, and is also a member-at-large of MCC Peace Section.

—Rachel Shenk

The Quest of an Ideal

by

Elizabeth Horsch [Bender]

In our series on Elizabeth Horsch Bender, which will continue into 1986, we choose to republish in this issue her valedictory address, given at the time of her graduation from high school at Scottdale, Pennsylvania, in 1913. "Our future is unknown to us . . .," Elizabeth Bender said, seventy years ago, "it is largely to be determined by our efforts as they are shaped by our ideals. . . ." Although Elizabeth was only 18 at the time, the beauty of the language combines with the maturity of idea, creating a message of equal value for humankind of the 1980s.

Elizabeth Bender has granted MHB permission to republish this essay (originally published in the Christian Monitor, September 1913), asking only that the reader be made aware that here is nothing but a youthful vision of a teenager from Scottdale, living in the atmosphere of pre-World War I.

—Leonard Gross

Man has always had ideals which he has striven to attain. In legendary history we have the beautiful story of Jason's quest for the golden fleece.

We all know how he set out with the resolute will that nothing should prevent his getting it; and, although he met with all sorts of adversities—great enough to turn back even Hercules—yet he remained undaunted and continued until at last he succeeded in taking his treasure from the sacred oak.

Another account, even more beautiful, is told by Lowell in his "Vision of Sir Launfal." Out of his cold, gray tower, to which none but nobility were ever admitted, young Sir Launfal started one day in June in search of the Holy Grail, the cup from which Christ and His disciples were supposed to have drunk at the Last Supper; and confidently vowed that he would never again sleep on a pillow until he had found it. So that night he lay down in the grass to sleep; and as he slept he dreamed. He saw himself going out over the bridge, proud, self-confident, and hopeful of the best. But just outside the gates he met a leper begging an alms; he felt his flesh crawl and shrank back. Scornfully he tossed at him a gold coin, but the leper did not accept it; he wanted a kind word, a blessing. But Sir Launfal rode on.

He sought for the cup until he was old—too old to search any longer—and then returned to his estate to spend the severe winter, only to find himself supplanted by another earl. While sitting outside the walls, shivering in the cold, he met the same leper, begging. This time, although he himself was in need, he sympathized with him, and shared with him his last crust of brown bread, and the water from his wooden bowl. The leper suddenly vanished, and a shining person stood before him and said:

"Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail,
Behold, it is here—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now,
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatsoever we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds

three,
Himself, his hungering neighbor,
and Me."

Sir Launfal's whole life was changed by this dream, for because of it new purposes were formed in his mind. Thus, in these two examples, the story of Jason, and the "Vision of Sir Launfal," we see that a man's whole character and career are determined by his ideals.

But someone may ask, "What is an ideal?" Webster defines it as "a mental conception regarded as a standard of perfection; a model of excellence." Other great men have also well defined it. "Ideals are the world's master," says one. Another, "An ideal is a fugitive which is never located."

We all have day dreams of what we wish to be, or have, or do; and as we dwell on these, there grows up an imaginary standard of perfection which exists in the mind as an ideal; and as we advance toward it, it is constantly receding from us.

A child's ideals are seldom lofty. He may envy the other boy who can wiggle his ears, or snap his fingers, or the one who wears the largest shoes. When he is a little older he begins to pride himself in his strength, and his highest ambition seems to be to surpass his fellows. Or, if he cannot excel here, he may try to get "stars" in school. And the greater his progress the higher he will find his standard has flown.

And so it is with the adult. Everyone has his ideals of life and is striving to reach them whether or not he is conscious of it. His highest purpose is dependent upon his ideals; and his character depends upon the nature of his purposes and the kind of ideals toward which he is striving. The men and women who have succeeded have been those who have had one aim in life and have striven daily to attain it. They did not arrive at their ideal at a single bound, but slowly, gradually, just as the sculptor with each stroke of his chisel brings the shapeless marble nearer to the likeness of a man. The best and noblest lives are those whose standard is a pure and lofty character.

Our minds are given to us, but our characters we make for ourselves by slow and steady growth. God has supplied us with abundant opportunities for being useful and happy and has

provided everything needed to attain to a lofty character. All that we need to do is to take advantage of what is offered us and to make the most of it. And we shall find that as we reach each stage in our advancement we are not satisfied, but unconsciously our ideal mounts a step higher.

Our future is unknown to us and nothing but time can reveal what lies hidden there. It is largely to be determined by our efforts as they are shaped by our ideals. Shall it be mean and paltry? No; let us set our ideals high, and even if we do miss the mark occasionally, our lives will be much nobler than if we should have ignoble ideals and always succeed. All have the opportunity of succeeding, but we see that if we wish to live worthy and noble lives we shall continually have to be in quest of lofty ideals. And what higher ideal can we have than to become daily more and more like Christ, who lived the noblest of lives to be an example to us.

Scottdale, Pa.

Recent Publications

Gibble, Phares Brubaker. *History and Genealogy of the Brubaker, Brubacher, Brewbaker Family in America* (Vol. 1). Eastern Pennsylvania Brubaker Association, 1979. Pp. 93. \$7.95. Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Rd., Lancaster, PA 17602-1499.

Gingerich, Laura (Stutzman). *Stutzman History: Steps from Switzerland*. Paoli, IN, 1979. Pp. 222. \$5.00. Order from Mrs. Fannie Miller, R. 1, Box 335, Greenfield Rd., Bronson, MI 49028.

Hanson, Phyllis Brechbiel. *The Brechbiel-Dilling Ancestry of Harry K. Brechbiel: Brumbaugh, Kreider, Metzger, Puterbaugh, and Others*. Albert Lea, MN. Pp. 255. \$22.00. Order from author, 1430 Academy Ave., Albert Lea, MN 56007.

Hartzler, H. Harold. *King Family History* (2 volumes). 1985. Pp. 995. \$35.00. Order from author, 5950 W. Missouri #166, Glendale, AZ 85301.

Hershberger, Roman. *Descendants of Jeremiah Miller and Lydia Troyer and their Lineal Descendants*. Middlefield, OH, 1984. Pp. 522. \$12.75. Order from author, 16119 E. High St., Apt. 104, Middlefield, OH 44062.

Lehman, Harvey C. *History & Family Record: The Benedict Lehman Family 1760-1983 - Elias Lehman Family Line*. Silver Springs, MD, 1983. Order from Lloyd Lehman, 3712 Kayson, Silver Springs, MD 20906.

Lehman, Thomas. *A Tree in a Forest*. Annville, PA, 1985. Pp. 90. \$10.00. Order from Thomas Lehman, R.D. 1, Box 827, Annville, PA 17003.

Shank, Thomas L. *Schenck/-Shenk/Shank: History of the Descendants of Andreas Schenck in America, 1732-1984*. Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1985. \$25.00. Order from author, 2290 Alemany Blvd, San Francisco, CA 94112.

Book Reviews

Directory of the Weaverland Conference Mennonite Churches, 1985. Compiled and published by Mary Edna Hoover. Includes "Historical Sketches of the Weaverland Conference Mennonite Congregations," by Amos B. Hoover. Available from compiler, (Route 1, Box 271, Galen Hall Rd., Reinholds, PA 17569). \$6.50 plus postage.

We are happy to present this Weaverland Conference Directory to the public. It is a culmination of years of both dreaming and research. Efforts were made to include every member adhering to the Weaverland Conference (Horning Church) as well as an historical sketch of the congregations and their leadership.

This work was largely compiled and published by Mary Edna Hoover who with the help of her teacher friends finished this monumental task of compiling a list of nearly 4000 members.

We encourage readers to call errors to our attention; we plan to publish an errata sheet in the *Home Messenger* within several months.

Typesetting was done by Rachel Martin of Hinkletown. Caligraphical art was done by Alice Hoover, and printing was done by Eerdmans of Grand Rapids, Michigan. This edition is comprised of 2000 copies, and they were released on August 27, 1985.

—Amos B. Hoover

John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest Report

1984-1985

This year a large number of well-written papers were entered into Class II, which explains in part the three sets of ties in this category. There were no awards granted for Class III. The results of the judging are as follows:

Class I (Graduate and Seminary)

- First:** "Paul Erb: Mennonite Diplomat," by Kevin Enns-Rempel (University of California, Riverside).
- Second:** (Tie between:) "Johannes B. Amstutz: First Generation in America," by James F. Stutzman-Amstutz (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries) and "The 'Western Ontario Mind' " by Doris Weber (Waterloo Lutheran Seminary).
- Third:** "Joseph Funk and his *Harmonia Sacra*," by Suzanne Gross (University of Maryland).

Class II (College Juniors and Seniors)

- First:** (Tie Between:) "Reinterpreting American History: A Mennonite Pacifistic Perspective," by Michael C. Peters (Bethel College) and "Mennonite Peace Identity Through Three Wars: 1914-1975," by Ben Redekop (Fresno Pacific College).
- Second:** (Tie between:) "Politicized Service and Teamwork Tensions: The Mennonite Central Committee in Vietnam, 1966-1969," by David Edward Leaman (Goshen College) and "A History and Analysis of Mennonite Involvement in Politics in Rockingham County, Virginia," by Douglas C. Lehman (Eastern Mennonite College).
- Third:** (Tie between:) "Men and Women Who Dare to Say No: Mennonite Resistance to Draft Registration, 1980-1985," by Mark Becker (Bethel College) and "Clara Eby Steiner: Buried Stone in God's Great Structure," by Todd Friesen (Goshen College).

Class IV (High School)

- First:** "Roles of Hutterite Women: Comparing East to West," by Jeanne Liechty (Bethany Christian High School).
- Second:** "A History of Camp Amigo: The First Ten Years," by Laurie Voran (Bethany Christian High School).

Listed below are the authors and titles of the additional papers in Class II; every one is of high quality. It is of significance to note some of the current interests of our younger scholars. We hope to see some of these manuscripts into print in the near future.

"The Anabaptist Martyrs: Their View of Death," by Janeen Bertsche (Bluffton College).

"The Effects of World War I and World War II on Mennonite Voting Habits," by Gary Oyer (Goshen College).

"Remember Who You Are: The Message of the Brummtupp Performance," by Jennifer Snyder (Goshen College).

"Concern: Taking the 'Anabaptist Vision' One More Step," by Harley W. Yoder (Goshen College).

"The Brethren of the Common Life and the Hutterites on the Communal Lifestyle," by J. Max Zook (Cedarville College).

—Leonard Gross, Contest Manager

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

Vol. XLVII

April, 1986

ISSN 0025-9357

No. 2

A Christian's Choice

We prefer to endure misery,
poverty, troubles, hunger, thirst,
heat, cold, and death,
in our mortal bodies,
and continue in the Word of the Lord,
rather than to lead
secure, easy lives with the world,
and for the sake of a short, transitory life
ruin our souls.

--Menno Simons
ca. 1539



The *Herold der Wahrheit* on Eternal Security

by Paton Yoder

Beginning in August, 1885, articles began to appear in the *Herold der Wahrheit* followed only by the insignia "S" to indicate the identity of the writer. These writings were somewhat more sophisticated theologically than was common for most of the articles appearing in the *Herold* and, more significantly, they gave polemical support to some doctrines which Mennonites and Amish had traditionally opposed or, more accurately, denounced. Appearing as they did in this quasi-official church paper—which, along with its companion paper in the English language, the *Herald of Truth*, had the ear of a large audience of Mennonites and Amish—these articles merit some special attention.

The first article by "S", "Unter der Gnade" ("Under Grace"), appeared in the August 15, 1885, issue of the *Herold der Wahrheit*, followed by two more articles in the next issue (September 1), then by four in the following number (September 15), and by five in the October 1 issue! In fact, "S" completely dominated this last number, there being no other major original paper (i. e., not borrowed from another periodical) in that issue.¹ Parenthetically it might be noted that only two of these articles—and these, perhaps the least controversial of the lot—appeared in the *Herald of Truth*. Furthermore, the subsequent controversy which these articles sparked was to be contained only in the German edition, the *Herold der Wahrheit*.

Much more significant than the volume of the writings of "S" is their doctrinal slant. As the theology of these articles became increasingly offensive to Funk's Mennonite readers, "S" apparently was forced to reveal his identity, either by Funk himself, or by the readers of the *Herold*, or

perhaps by both. In the November 15, 1885, number, at the close of a follow-up article on his favorite theme ("Mehr Über Matth. 24:13"²), he gave his name as J. F. Sohm.

A brief examination of the content of the more controversial of Sohm's articles results in the following: In his first paper on "Matth. 24:13"³ Sohm asserted that the verse in question, "but he that shall endure to the end shall be saved," did not apply to the believer in the church age, a position quite unacceptable to almost all of the readers of the *Herold*, especially the Old Order Amish. Said Sohm, if this verse applies to the Christian then "I in this life must live in constant, agonizing uncertainty whether I finally will be eternally saved or eternally damned." But if it was not said to the believer, and if the more relevant passages of the New Testament may be taken at their face value, then "I may already here rejoice in the blessed assurance that my eternal salvation before God is a completed transaction which nothing can evermore overthrow." The afore-quoted verse, said Sohm, was not made by Christ in his capacity as Savior of mankind and as the head of the church (a heavenly kingdom), but rather in his capacity as king of the Jews, and in anticipation of the millennium during which he would rule over the restored kingdom of the Jews (an earthly kingdom); hence it did not apply to Christians in the church age.

Having disposed of the text, Sohm proceeded to show that one may have eternal life here and now and that, by definition, and by the testimony of many New Testament passages which he quotes, the gift of eternal life is unconditional; it may never be terminated. He summed up his posi-

tion by asking and answering a rhetorical question: May I not after all lose this gift of eternal life; is it not possible that I might let go of my hold on Christ? To this question his response was highly commiserative, almost condescending: "Beloved fellow Christian, you do not hold His hand; rather He holds yours." Sohm reiterated this doctrine of eternal security in other articles in the *Herold*, particularly the one referred to above in which he finally revealed his identity, but for discernible reasons his voice was soon thereafter shut off from the pages of the paper.

Thus ends the account of an intrusion of the doctrine of eternal security into this Mennonite periodical. But before the story can be laid to rest two questions must be addressed: First there is the question of the identity of J. F. Sohm. Students of the *Martyrs Mirror* will recognize him as the translator of the 1886 edition of that work, published at Elkhart, Indiana, by J. F. Funk. On the basis of extensive research in the Funk Papers, historian J. C. Wenger says that Sohm (1855-1902) was an immigrant from Austria whom Funk supported during the three years in which the latter was translating the *Martyrs Mirror* from the original Dutch edition of 1660. He was a Methodist, Wenger adds, but later converted to Catholicism and died in New York City in 1902.⁴ While providing significant, though scanty data on the identity of Sohm, this information leaves us with some unanswered questions. Not the least of these questions is concerned with how a Methodist came to espouse the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, a belief not at all in harmony with Methodist tenets. One might theorize, in view of his later confessional shift to the Catholic

The *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is published quarterly by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church and distributed to the members of the Mennonite Historical Association. **Editor:** Leonard Gross; **Book Review Editor:** Gerald C. Studer; **Office Editor:** Rachel Shenk; **Production and Design:** Carl Lind; **Associate Editors:** Rafael Falcón, Jan Gleysteen, Merle Good, Amos B. Hoover, Albert N. Keim, James O. Lehman, Winifred Paul, Steven D. Reschly, Lorraine Roth, Shirley Showalter, Wilmer Swope, and J. C. Wenger. Dues for regular membership (\$5), contributing membership (\$10-50), supporting membership (\$50-100), sustaining membership (\$100-250), and sponsoring membership (\$250 and above) per year may be sent to the editor. (Library rate: \$5 per year.) Articles and news items should be addressed to the editor, 1700 S. Main Street, Goshen, Indiana 46526 (Tel. 219/533-3161, Ext. 477).

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*. Microfilms of Volumes I-XLIV of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from: University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

Editorial

This is the Menno Simons Year, the anniversary of Menno's decision in 1536 to cast his lot with the Anabaptists. Menno's call for integrity, as found on page one of this issue, lies at the center of the Dutch branch of Anabaptism, just as it does for the earlier Swiss and Austrian branches. Grete Mecenseffy, who died this past year in Vienna, Austria, spoke to this same idea of integrity while she was among the Mennonites in North America in 1972, a few excerpts of which also appear below.

Paton Yoder's continuing investigations into the nineteenth century have uncovered a situation that Mennonites more than once have needed to work through, the question of eternal security. Yoder's concluding observations of possible cause-and-effect relationships to later developments are particularly noteworthy.

We continue with another of a series of interviews with Elizabeth Bender, on the nature of Mennonite leadership over the past century or so. Elizabeth Bender lived at the various centers of Mennonite institutional activity, including Scottsdale, Hesston, Harrisonburg and Goshen, and hence speaks out of her own broad and varied experience with many Mennonitisms that she has needed to wrestle with throughout her nine decades of life.

—Leonard Gross

faith, that he may have been seeking, rather than experiencing, the security which he claimed for all believers.

An even more pressing question for Mennonites relates to the reason why Editor John F. Funk allowed expressions of this "heresy" to appear in his paper over a period of several months. Although Funk had had a crisis conversion during some extended meetings in the Presbyterian congregation which he attended while living in Chicago (1857-1865), it seems clear that he had become very much a Mennonite by the time he launched the *Herald of Truth* and the *Herold der Wahrheit* in 1864; or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that he had reclaimed his Mennonite heritage by that time.⁵ Why, then, this aberration?

While it is true that at times Funk allowed his paper to become a sounding board for the differing opinions of his Mennonite, Amish Mennonite, and Old Order Amish constituencies (usually with a view to arriving at a consensus),⁶ it still seems that in this instance he went beyond these boundaries by publishing articles which advocated a teaching which was anathema to all branches of Mennonites. It would not appear that this was an issue that required dialogue and resolution for any of the several branches of that denomination.

Why then did Funk allow this veritable explosion of material supporting eternal security and God's free grace (current Anabaptist theologians would call it "cheap" grace), and all this from the versatile pen of a thirty-year-old non-

Mennonite? Was this affair deliberately planned by Editor Funk, or did it happen without his knowledge or consent? Either option seems implausible, but just possibly the latter solution makes a little more sense than the former. Perhaps the demands on Funk's time in editing two papers, along with his extensive travels and other varied activities, coupled with his only modest facility with the German language, may have forced him to use Sohm as a kind of assistant editor of the *Herold der Wahrheit*. If this guess is correct, then it is not too difficult to imagine that Sohm may have taken unwarranted advantage of the situation by flooding the *Herold* with his own compositions and his personal beliefs.

Our implausible theory—but nevertheless more plausible than the alternate possibility—may not be correct, but what is clear is that Funk, after a three-month lapse (September-November, 1885), began to take the matter in hand. This he did, not with heavy hands but quite deftly. First he entered his own contribution to the discussion as the lead article in the December 1 issue of the *Herold*. Entitled "Das Geheimniss unserer Erlösung" (The mystery of our salvation), the article invited all men "to accept fully this free, glorious grace as a gift from God and be saved," and this, without any hint that those who accepted such an invitation were eternally secure. A later issue carried similar articles by others on "Assurance of Eternal Life," "Self-Assurance," and on how I may "Know that I am a Child of God,"⁷ again without any reference to the

security of the believer.

During all of these months Funk himself never made a direct attack on the doctrine of eternal security, but he did not hesitate to allow others to do so. Among those who did so were two widely known Old Order Amish bishops. In the December 15 number, F. Schwarzendruber (almost certainly Frederick Schwarzendruber, a deacon-bishop of Johnson County, Iowa) vigorously defended the Amish interpretation of Matt. 24:13, which accepted Christ's statement about persevering as applying to the believers in His church.⁸ A month later David A. Troyer, long-time Amish bishop of Holmes County, Ohio, submitted an extremely articulate response to Sohm's "heresy."⁹ It should be noted in passing that neither of these bishops gave any negative response to what may be called the doctrine of "present assurance," or assurance, depending on one's continued personal commitment to Christ. In fact, Troyer's paper suggests a kind of tacit acceptance of this position.

In the light of Funk's own crisis conversion, his cautious and qualified support of those who insisted that one should and could know whether he or she was saved is somewhat surprising. This pietistic doctrine of present assurance was finding increasing support among both Mennonites and Amish Mennonites, but Funk was concerned about the confusion which it sometimes brought to persons "who cannot accept it." Furthermore, he thought that one who claims assurance of salvation should be able to present scriptural reasons for such confidence, a circumstance which he felt did not obtain very often. As to the question of eternal security, he was not certain which was more reprehensible—for one to be unconcerned about personal salvation because of spiritual indifference, or to have the same unconcern because one felt oneself to be eternally secure!¹⁰

Of special interest to the writer is the fact that within a year after these articles appeared in the *Herold*, three of his great uncles, all middle-aged sons of "Tennessee" John Stoltzfus and all living in Knox County, Tennessee, and all probably readers of the *Herold*, accepted the teachings of the Plymouth Brethren on eternal security and, with their families, af-

filiated with them. While the timing of this defection from the Amish Mennonites by my ancestral relatives in relation to the appearance of these articles in the *Herold* may have been largely coincidental, it is still quite possible that these papers provided considerable encouragement to them to convert to the Plymouth Brethren.¹¹

1 Below is a complete list of the articles written by "S" which appeared in the *Herold der Wahrheit* in the months of August through November, 1885. Only the two marked with an asterisk appeared in the *Herald of Truth*.

- a. "Unter der Gnade," Aug. 15:241-42.
- b. "Ist die Welt im Besserwerden begriffen?" Sept. 1:257-58.*
- c. "Alle eure Sorg werfet auf Ihm, den Er sorget für euch," Sept. 1:260-61.
- d. "Matth. 24:13," Sept. 15:273-74.
- e. "Col. 1:8," Sept. 15:275-76.
- f. "Gemeinschaft mit Gott," Sept. 15:276.
- g. "Der Weg, die Wahrheit, und das Leben," Sept. 15:278.
- h. "Frieden," Oct. 1:289-90.
- i. "Wo aber der Geist des Herrn ist, da ist Freiheit," Oct. 1:290-92.
- j. "Was bedeutet der Sabbath?" Oct. 1:292-93.*
- k. "Das Kreuz," Oct. 1:293-94.
- l. "Die Welt," Oct. 1:294-95.
- m. "Der rechte Kampf," Oct. 15:305-06.
- n. "Mehr über Matth. 24:13," Nov. 15:337-38.

2 See note 1-n, above.

3 See note 1-d, above.

4 Telephone conversation with J. C. Wenger, Nov. 25, 1985.

5 Joseph Liechty and James O. Lehman, "From Yankee to Nonresistant: John F. Funk's Chicago Years, 1857-1865," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 59 (July 1985):203-247.

6 Conference with Leonard Gross, Nov. 25, 1985.

7 In the *Herold der Wahrheit* 23 (15 Mar. 1886) these articles appear as follows:
a. H. A., "Wie kann ich wissen das ich ein Kind Gottes bin?" pp. 81-82.

b. M. B., "Die Gewissheit des ewigen Lebens," pp. 83-84.

c. P. S., "Selbstgewissheit," p. 85.

8 F. Schwarzendruber, "Prüfet aber Alles und das Gute behaltet," *HdW* 22 (15 Dec. 1882):369-70.

9 David A. Troyer, "Wer aber beharret bis an's Ende, der wird selig," *HdW* 23 (15 Jan. 1886):17-18.

10 Funk made these observations in the form of editorial comments attached to articles strongly affirming present assurance. They may be found in the *HdW* 23 (1 Feb. 1886):37 and *HdW* 23 (15 Mar. 1886):84.

11 For an account of the conversion of Chris, John B., and Jacob Stoltzfus to the Plymouth Brethren see Paton Yoder, *Eine Wurzel, Tennessee John Stoltzfus* (Lititz, Pa., 1979), pp. 97-99.

Grete Mecenseffy, on Anabaptism

On September 11, 1985, Dr. Grete Mecenseffy, Professor on the Theological Faculty of the University of Vienna, Austria, died, in her eighty-eighth year of life. From the Reformed tradition, Dr. Mecenseffy grew in her appreciation of Anabaptism, until in her last two decades of life, Anabaptist research was the all-consuming task she set for herself, publishing the three, definitive volumes of Austrian Anabaptist source materials in the *Täuferakten* series.

In the year 1972, Mecenseffy came to North America to lecture, among other places, at Goshen College, to the Mennonite Historical Society Dinner Meeting on February 28, and to an Anabaptist Theology Seminar class, at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana.

In honor of Grete Mecenseffy's 85th birthday, Alfred Raddatz and Kurt Lüthi, colleagues at the University of Vienna, edited a Festschrift, published in 1984, *Evangelischer Glaube und Geschichte*.

As a tribute to this friend and "sister"—rightfully belonging to the extended family of all those groups within the Anabaptist tradition—we publish two excerpts of Grete Mecenseffy's off-the-cuff reflections about the Anabaptist experience, spoken in 1972:

On Discipleship. "I think that it is captivating how deep this new [Anabaptist] religion was rooted in these men and women; that they were ready to give everything up [for what really mattered most to them:] the real creed or Nachfolge Christi. And they really came to the climax of the Nachfolge when the Bluttauf—the baptism of blood—was more or less given to them. If a possibility of escaping a dungeon was given, they went off, very often—Griesinger twice—and others, several times. But never by violence [in breaking away or liberating themselves] because they really made this punishment their own sacrifice of life. They gave [themselves to] God.

"That is not the usual behaving of man; the contrary is really the case. I think especially in our time that this

is a moving thing.

"And what I was also taken aback of, was this unbreakable will of the government to extinguish these men who never really in practice used violence. The government always said . . . they are robbers, for it always had in mind the Peasants' War which was really a terrible thing for them.

"... I think that nonresistance was one common denominator among the Anabaptists.

"But did they think that they were free of sin?—with the baptism, you see. Some did. Others did not. . . . In general they did not think that they were really free of sin."



G. Mecenseffy

On the Spirit of Anabaptism. "[I took to Anabaptism] because as a historian and as a theologian I was interested in this question and I was moved by the courage and the steadfastness of these people which really couldn't have worked in them without some power outside of them. Really, you have to go back to the first times of Christianity to find the same attitude. [However, as regards my own scholarship in] my country, I began not with Anabaptism; I began with lectures on Protestantism in

Austria when I was on the faculty, when I started lectures there. And I wrote a history—it is a small book but it is still valid today—about Austrian Protestantism. In that book I included for the first time a chapter on Anabaptism. There [were many] problems with the Lutherans because Lutherans also today think of Anabaptism as being heretical and that no true follower of Luther [shall have] to study this. That was really the reason.

“Anabaptism also has much in common with Pietism. I also studied Pietism—the personal conversion of the people. [The Pietists] were individualistic, of course, but you must give them a place in the whole of the history of the churches. . . . There is a certain relationship between Anabaptism and the Pietists.”

—Leonard Gross

Genealogy Conference Announcement

Don Yoder, professor of folk life studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, will serve as keynote speaker at the eighth annual Genealogy Conference, sponsored by the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on Saturday, April 5, 1986. Open to the public, more than twenty sessions of registrants' choice will convene on the campus of Lancaster Mennonite High School, five miles east of Penn Square in Lancaster along U.S. Route 30.

Registration fees of \$15.00 for Society members and \$20.00 for non-members must be postmarked by March 25. The optional lunch on the premises costs \$3.85, and the evening banquet at nearby Leola Family Restaurant is \$9.00 extra. Nearly two hundred persons attended in 1985. More details of the program plus registration and lodging information are available from Lola M. Lehman, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602 (Phone (717) 393-9745).

Conversations with Elizabeth Bender III

In July 1985, MHB published Part II of the series, Conversations with Elizabeth Bender. In this issue, Part III appears.

Much of the conversation—which took place on April 25, 1983—centers in a discussion about certain Mennonite Church leaders in the first half of this century who helped hold the Church together. However, near the end of the segment, Elizabeth Bender also reflects upon her own church involvement during these decades, and upon her views on the abiding elements that are central in her own faith and experience.

We hope to continue with a fourth segment in a coming MHB issue. —L.G.

Mennonite Leadership: Holding the Church Together

Leonard Gross: How did Harold Bender view the *Concern** movement?

Elizabeth Bender: He was worried about it. He was afraid it might lead to a split for one thing: a division in the church. It was close enough after the time of the Goshen troubles when there was great danger of divisiveness; there was some, of course, going on.

Gross: You mean, the 1923 closing of Goshen College?

Bender: Yes. That's what he was afraid of.

Gross: So that even though the *Concern* movement was thirty years later, there was still that fear, and perhaps a well-founded fear, of divisiveness, of division?

Bender: Yes. Harold tried personally very hard to avoid anything divisive. Sometimes he even trespassed against his own subject, leaning this way or that way, when he was

talking to people. But the thing in his mind was: “Don't say anything that will deepen that rift.” I remember his talking for instance to Clayton Yake.

Gross: C. F. Yake?

Bender: Yes. And I thought Harold was leaning too much to the plain-clothes and conservative side—and he admitted that. You can't always go around telling the whole truth wherever you go. So it was very important to him to hold things together.

Gross: Are you saying that Harold Bender ceded on the minor, or secondary things, in order to strengthen the primary and central essentials of our faith and life?

Bender: Yes. That's a good way to put it.

Gross: For Harold Bender, what were the mainstays in the Mennonite Church that he was trying to maintain and strengthen?

Bender: For one thing, a love of the church; that it was very important to love the church; not pick out individuals here and here and here that I'm going to like because that is not the right way; but, on top of all that—or at the bottom or it—there should be a love, not only for the individual brothers and sisters, but for the “brotherhood.” And I think that was very important to him.

Gross: You could say of course that the Anabaptist Vision of discipleship would be central for Harold Bender?

Bender: Yes. That was the church to him.

Gross: Harold Bender avoided theological jargon and always came back to the essentials that had to do with the quality of life.

Bender: Yes, that's right. You have it straight.

Gross: I would like to turn to you for a moment and try to figure out where you were or where you are in the area of faith and doubt. I think in our times of conversation together: we see faith as having the other side of the coin which is doubt. A genuine faith is not limitless. We have substance and spirit and structures for our faith. We also have question marks; there's mystery. There are things that we aren't sure about. Is this homing in on your approach? You're not primarily doctrinal, I've come to see that in your approach.

Bender: Yes.

Gross: Your Christianity, at its

*The *Concern* movement had its beginnings in Europe, among a handful of American Mennonites serving there under North American Mennonite agencies in the early 1950s. The group began publishing an occasional pamphlet series, *Concern*, in June 1954. In 1958 and following, the subtitle of the series was: “A Pamphlet Series for Questions of Christian Renewal.” The final issue, Number 18, was published in July, 1971. The seven who took responsibility for the first issue were: Irvin B. Horst, John W. Miller, Paul Peachey, Calvin Redekop, David A. Shank, Orley Swartzentruber, and John Howard Yoder.

center, does not lie in a *system* of beliefs.

Bender: That's right. Except the one basic of God's love and sending His Son. That is basic to my view. I'm no theologian to start with, of course, so maybe my theological statements wouldn't be very accurate, but I don't believe there are any Christians, except the most dogmatic kind, that don't allow anything that they don't believe, that don't have questions about some of these mysteries that aren't quite clear in God's Word. So I don't know what else I can say on that. I have no fixed idea whatsoever on the Second Coming and the end times. I don't know what's coming, I haven't the least idea. We know what the Bible says, but I can't make heads or tails out of it, making a program out of what it says. There are questions that, I think, go through every thinking person's mind, that you have to come to grips with and sometimes, you never will on certain questions. These kinds of questions should simply be left open.

Gross: Let's move back into our Mennonite history to the era, often named the Daniel Kauffman era. What did Daniel Kauffman try to do for the church, at its most central point?

Bender: I would say, hold it together. It's my feeling that Dan Kauffman was going to sympathize with the very conservative, but he wouldn't personally admonish even some of the more liberal. He was pretty pat on the outer things, but he criticized gently. He did seem to have a conscience against having musical instruments. I don't think it was just a motive of avoiding clashes in the church. Yet Daniel Kauffman was much gentler than others, who were very rigid on the doctrinal points—whose primary concern was not to hold the church together, but to have right doctrine. I probably have told you already that I was immersed in the Sprunger church. And Scottdale took me in; there was no objection at all to accepting my baptism by immersion, but we were always careful enough not to let one or two others know it. They would have raised a fuss about it. Yet Dan Kauffman accepted it. He didn't think immersion was the right method, but that wasn't the important point in baptism, to him. So he

was not nearly as radical on the doctrinal points—the outward doctrinal points—as some others. I wish I knew more about what happened in Kansas, and the question of ties. People were made to take off their ties and some people didn't see that their faith was stuck in ties and things of that sort. And they just split off. Many young people didn't join at all. I don't think that would have happened to Dan Kauffman's preaching. I think he would have encouraged the young people to work on the tie issue later on.

Gross: So Daniel Kauffman was against ties.

Bender: Yes.

Gross: But he would have done it in a way that would not have led to division.

Bender: Yes.

Gross: Is it fair to say that Daniel Kauffman undergirded a doctrinal approach to Christianity, with his own publication in 1898 of *Bible Doctrines*, even though, as I remember your saying on various occasions, he didn't speak about doctrine as much in the pulpit.

Bender: That is right. He wrote about such things, and the *Gospel Herald* was upholding all those things. But he was never that way in speaking. When he met you face to face, he was not that way.

Gross: You are already saying something about the effects and consequences of Daniel Kauffman. But say more: you said, his concern was to hold the church together.

Bender: Yes. I think he was a positive influence in the long run.

Gross: Let's go back to John S. Coffman, even though you did not know him very well, if at all.

Bender: No, I didn't know him at all, I was too young to know him.

Gross: Still, from what you heard about him, and so on, what was at the center of John S. Coffman?

Bender: Evangelism. The church was growing cold, and losing a lot of its young people. And he was trying to retain the young people and build up the church. Now as far as I know—I heard my father talk about him—it was not a matter of doctrine with him, especially not the outward: having to do with appearance, and so on. It was rather loving God, and loving the church.

Gross: Did he succeed in strengthening the church in those

areas?

Bender: Pretty well, yes. My impression is that he made a big difference in the Old Mennonite Church. The young people joined more willingly and readily, and so on.

Gross: Let's backtrack to John Funk. You knew him, but not in his earlier years.

Bender: That's right. I was too young.

Gross: Maybe we've talked enough about him. Do you have anything more to say about what was at the center of John Funk?

Bender: It was not doctrinal as far as I know. It was also holding the church together. And that's why he started the paper, the *Herold der Wahrheit* and the *Herald of Truth*. More than that, I can't tell you. Later in his life, of course—I don't know the story of why—he was put out of the church, or, at least, silenced as a minister. But even as an old man he was still a gentle person.

Gross: How about M. S. Steiner?

Bender: I didn't know enough about him. But he was certainly a man to hold things together too. The few times I heard him preach, it was never on sticking to the letter of the law, of the church law.

Gross: Well, you heard him preach then?

Bender: Oh yes! I heard Menno Steiner preach. And he was influential in getting my father to Scottdale.

Gross: What type of man was M. S. Steiner?

Bender: Gentle but powerful and forceful. He was a good preacher. I remember that even though I was only in my early teens, when a person doesn't have too much judgment on that sort of thing. But I remember that I had no trouble listening to him, concentrating on what he was saying.

Gross: M. S. Steiner would have been one whose consequences and effects would have been positive, and he would have helped to hold the church together?

Bender: Yes. I would have to say so. Yes.

Gross: Let's go to Orie O. Miller.

Bender: He thought of himself as someone holding things together too, I think. Of course, he was never a preacher. But in his work in the Mennonite Central Committee, he certainly did that very thing, of holding things together. He was a

very strong force in that, for many, many years. But personally, though, he was in Lancaster County. He was somewhat in a tight spot there. He had to agree with the ministers there, or at least not openly disagree. And yet his leanings were much broader. I think that he never had a fair chance to open himself up and express himself. The Lancaster situation was still too tight in those days. I know that he was in favor of Goshen College.

Gross: Let's go to Paul Erb.

Bender: From the beginning, one mark of Paul Erb was his sincerity, I would say. I think he would have had a hard time to be accommodating to one side or the other if it was against his principles. He was very conservative in his youth, though. In his college days he was on the conservative side. But not with the kind of spirit of some other conservatives. As time went on, of course, his legalism gradually evaporated. In his later years he made a statement; he had made up his mind to be a happy old man: now you couldn't do that if you were always worried and at odds with what the young people were doing, unless you had lost all your sincerity too. But he didn't. No. I think he was ready to see, the times are changing.

Gross: He was no theologian.

Bender: No, he wasn't a theologian. That's true.

Gross: He enjoyed Shakespeare.

Bender: Yes. Poetry in general. But he said, you can tell by reading Shakespeare—this he said when he was in his twenties, so I don't hold it against him as a mature man—you can tell it wasn't meant to be put on stage. It was meant to be read. Theaters were sin in those days.

Gross: Was that his way of being able to stay with the church, and at the same time enjoy Shakespeare?

Bender: It might be so. That thought hadn't entered my head, but that was characteristic of him—staying with the church, yes. And not being critical of the church. Not being critical.

Gross: We have covered the faith and doubt elements a bit; now, how do you see yourself, through your eighty years and more, as part of the church, and as an influence in the church?

Bender: Well, I tell you. While I was raising the family and teaching, I was so busy I functioned only as Harold's wife as far as my church

contribution is concerned. I did a lot of entertaining of guests. We had visitors again and again, when people came in. So my function was, I think, almost exclusively as Harold's wife. I hope I indirectly made some contribution in that way. But more than that I can't claim.

Gross: All the way through 1962?

Bender: Yes. Yes. My life has changed somewhat since then. I haven't been nearly so busy—I retired from teaching and I have had more time to think and read than I did then, but I don't see myself as having been a great influence in the church. I was by nature retiring. I never, in any way, put myself forward, I am pretty sure. And I didn't feel that I was being abused or anything like that. I filled, oh, what I thought was my duty day by day, pleasant duties and had pleasure with them too. But I can't claim that I was what you call a pillar in the church or that I ever felt that I was.

Gross: What do you consider to be the abiding things now, twenty years or more since 1962, the year of Harold's death? You have been doing some thinking: What are the abiding elements we need to maintain, to be true to our foundation?

Bender: Charity at the bottom of everything, I suppose. Even if we differ with a person, we can still be charitable. Of course, we must also have a theological foundation, I think. That point is related to a certain legalistic era in particular—which is dropping off in our branch of the church—there are conservative branches yet of course that have it. There isn't any great difference between us and the General Conference Mennonites any more. It may be that in another fifty years, no differences will exist any more. And it will be one church.

Gross: You mentioned that we need, of course, charity as our foundation; yet we also need a theological structure.

Bender: Yes.

Gross: What goes into that theological structure?

Bender: Well, I am no theologian, so I have a hard time saying it. But I would say, the love of God and salvation through Jesus Christ. Those two things, I think, would be the very minimum, and very basic elements of the church, in my mind. But I don't claim to have any theological

knowledge—how you analyze the Trinity, for instance. That is getting into pretty deep theology and I don't think the rank and file, including me, can understand that. For instance the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus only at his baptism, etc. How do you explain that? Surely if they are one, the Spirit was there all the time—so I don't try to explain that. Other people may have one kind of an explanation and others, another, etc.

Gross: So you would prefer to simplify it and say, well, God does love us and we know it because of Jesus.

Bender: Yes.

Gross: And through Jesus we find fulfillment.

Bender: Yes. Yes, the atonement I would make basic too. His dying for us and for our sins.

Gross: In a very real way, our Christian theology and Christian faith need to reflect something of the current scene. There is an interrelationship there. We need to know what is happening in the world today. It is one world, now, I think all of us would have to agree. We therefore must relate our theology to the current times.

Bender: Yes, that is right. So, if the theology of one part of the country differs from another part of the country, there may be a good reason for that. It isn't necessarily to be condemned.

Gross: You are saying that theology is a servant to something more important?

Bender: Yes. You are right.

Gross: Of the people we have mentioned, what is the common element among all the positive servants of the church in the past? Is it the idea of holding things together?

Bender: Well, it is obvious that the ones who tried to hold the church together are the ones who are remembered now as having contributed. Some in the radical group I don't think were intent on holding it together; they were intent on believing exactly the right thing, particularly on outward things.

Gross: What other names did we not mention this afternoon that should be mentioned—over the last hundred years or more? Harold Bender, without a doubt, would need to be named. We talked about him earlier, and I did not mention him again. And Guy Hershberger, I

think, we would assume tried to hold things together.

Bender: Yes. Yes, and Sanford Yoder certainly had influence in the church. He was also a pacific person. Yes. He didn't originate fights that I know of. Noah Oyer didn't live long enough. He would probably have developed in that same way. Now let's see. I can't go back farther. I can't go back farther than that—the opening of the present century. At Eastern Mennonite College, I think probably C. K. Lehman would have been one of the more influential men. At Goshen, Sanford Yoder, mostly. And then Harold, and then as you said, Guy Hershberger and Edward Yoder—if he had lived a little longer he probably could have too, but he was no public speaker and therefore he would have been a little handicapped in promoting any ideas he had.

Gross: How should our history be written?

Bender: I remember my father trying to explain in his early writings on church history, when we were in Scottdale—in the earlier days of Scottdale. He thought, to get the real story of the Elkhart church, you need the details of the Funk story, but it wouldn't have been edifying, so he never did write that down. That was a problem with him, whether he should or not. He said, the young people don't have to know all those bad stories. But that perverts history too, a little. So there, I don't know where you would draw the line. I think he did right in not airing the quarrels of the Funk Publishing House and the Elkhart congregation. More than that, I wouldn't know what kind of advice to give. The historian I think, no matter what history he is writing, is always faced with the problem of whether something really contributes or whether truth is perverted by not putting something in: which outweighs the other? More than that, I can't tell you.

—To Be Continued

Recent Publications

Brubaker, Carolyn Horst. *History and Genealogy of Jacob M. Horst (1828-1895) & Magdalena Weaver (1832-1900)*. Dallas, Pennsylvania,

1985. Pp. 143. Order from Clarke E. Hess, 27 Lititz Run Rd., Lititz, PA 17543.

Cross, Marie & Jeanne (Schrock) Riegsecker. *Family Record of Johannes Steury & Anna Lengacher and their descendants*. Goshen, Indiana, 1985. Pp. 156. \$6.50. Order from Marie Cross, 66393 S.R. 15, Goshen, IN 46526.

Gingerich, Eli E. & Mary. *Jacob Guengerich Family History: Descendants of Jacob Guengerich & Barbara Miller*. Middlebury, Indiana, 1985. \$16.00 plus \$2.00 postage. Order from Eli Gingerich, Route 2, 54894 CR 43, Middlebury, IN 46540.

Kroeker, Evangeline, Compiler. *Johann Boese (1816-1977)*. Clovis, California, 1985. Pp. 354. \$30.00. Order from Compiler, 1256 Sierra, Clovis, CA 93612.

Roth, Olivia and Verdella Harloff, Compilers. *Roth-Lichti Family History and Genealogy*. New Hamburg, Ontario, 1984. \$5.00. Order from Olivia Roth, R.R. 2, New Hamburg, Ontario N0B 2G0.

Schmidt, Elsie (Duerksen). *Jacob & Helena (Schroeder) Schmidt, 1823-1985*. Hillsboro, Kansas, 1985. Pp. 123. \$15.00. Order from Mrs. Anton Schmidt, Route 3, Box 115, Hillsboro, KS 67063.

Schwartz, Mrs. Abe. *Descendants of John P. & Barbara Schwartz, 1876-1985*. Centerville, Michigan, 1985. Pp. 89. \$3.00. Order from author, 25484 Truckenmiller, Centerville, MI 49032.

Schwartz, Mrs. Abe. *Descendants of Tobe L. & Amanda Miller, 1870-1985*. Centerville, Michigan, 1985. Pp. 105. \$4.00. Order from author, 25484 Truckenmiller, Centerville, MI 49032.

Sherrick, Anna Pearl and Mrs. Neal (Anita) Sherrick. *A Pioneer Family in Illinois: Martin and Susannah Strickler Sherrick*. 1979. Pp. 152. \$18.00. Order from Neal Sherrick, Box 31, Loraine, IL 62349.

Smith, Catherine E., Compiler. *Christian Kinzie (-1774), Born Near Thun, Switzerland: A Genealogy of the . . .* Wolcottville, Indiana, 1981. \$15.25. Order from author, 108 Spruce Lane, North Manchester, IN 46962.

Yoder, Christopher K. *The Reuben Yoder Family and its Ancestry*. Battle Creek, Michigan, 1983. \$6.75. Order from author, 203 Lakeshire Rd., Battle Creek, MI 49015.

Book Reviews

Daniel S. Iutzi, Jacob R. Bender: Servants of God and the Church. By Hugh Laurence and Lorraine Roth. Waterloo, Ontario: Historical Committee of the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, 1984. Pp. 72. Paperback.

In the early 1870s, the Amish and Mennonites of Ontario felt the first stirrings of revivalism. The East Zorra (Amish) Mennonite Church kept a middle ground attitude toward these incoming changes. It was ably led by two men, Daniel S. Iutzi and Jacob R. Bender who put their heart into the work of God for the East Zorra church.

In this publication of the Historical Committee of the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, the perceptive work of Hugh Laurence reflects the turn-of-the-century problems. This era is of great interest to the historian reflecting upon the effects of change in the Mennonite Church. Urbanization, economic prosperity and a splintering of the basic facets of community life gave way to an evaluation and reform of the church structures and practices.

Laurence points out that the Ontario Amish Mennonites were mostly reformists. They "attempted to integrate Mennonite and revivalist theologies and lifestyles." Jacob R. Bender and Daniel S. Iutzi, in the early 1900s, each approached the situation differently but both with an attitude of moderation. In their separate roles as bishop and deacon they came together, complementing each other.

The booklet gives an excellent overview of these two men as they lived out an historical era. The author gives a healthy interpretation of church life at East Zorra.

Lorraine Roth edited the book and rewrote some sections. The final result is a book that shows appreciation for and understanding of Jacob Bender and Daniel Iutzi as they worked with the people in a difficult period of our church history.

—Rachel A. Shenk

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

Vol. XLVII

July, 1986

ISSN 0025-9357

No. 3

The Mennonite Vision of 1896

In 1896, John S. Coffman delivered a remarkable address to the students and faculty of the Elkhart Institute on "The Spirit of Progress." It was a recital of the great eras of humankind. It set the Reformation controversies on faith within the larger Renaissance setting. Coffman called his audience to be true to their Anabaptist forebears, yet only as they in turn were true to the Jesus of history. Indeed, the very backbone of Coffman's address, the idea of progress, naturally called for an appreciation for the vitality that history alone can bring to a faith, a faith which otherwise would be without the substance of an existential discipleship, and without the spirit of the Christ of the new covenant within history that we are to pass on to our children's children.

All the more remarkable is the fact that the author himself was the leading Mennonite evangelist of his day, who longed for the outworking of the Spirit of renewal for all Christian groups, including his own. Although John S. Coffman the historian and philosopher surface throughout the document, reproduced below, the spirit of the evangelist also resounds for all the world to hear, especially in the concluding thoughts of the address. But this is as it should ever be for a church that throughout its 460-year history has placed so much emphasis on Jesus as Lord, whom we follow in obedience.

—Leonard Gross

The Spirit of Progress

by John S. Coffman

One of the definitions of *progress* is, "advancement toward a higher or better state, as in civilization; improvement." "Human progress," says a renowned writer, "consists in a continual increase in the number of these, who, ceasing to live the animal life alone and to feel the pleasures of sense only, come to participate in the intellectual life also."

The *Spirit of Progress* was planted into man when Jehovah breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living soul. This spirit has been either in active development or in blighting retrogression ever since Adam spoke to his Master or formed a wooden spade and rake to cultivate the soil in Eden; or even the first seamstress exchanged the apron of fig leaves for the garment of skins. How the first man began to shape implements and other contrivances for convenience and comfort is almost inconceivable to us. In his hand was no polished blade of shining steel, no rude iron ax, not even a stone hatchet. He began with nothing but the spirit to progress. How the first woman could do the cooking without oven or kettle, and make and mend

clothes without needle or thread or any other appliances will always be a matter of conjecture. Surely she was ready for different methods if the readiness for change of fashions by the woman of 1896 is any criterion of the disposition of her remote ancestor.

From this rude beginning man has progressed in discovery and construction till the more favorably situated dwell in mansions, and live on the most nourishing and the most dainty foods that the earth produces, no matter how distant the place of their production. He has discovered about all that is desirable or profitable in distant lands and beyond the seas. He has invented means of transportation that will bring to his door in a few weeks the products of the antipodes. In a few months he can make, in comparative safety, a journey around the globe; and he can send an intelligible message the 25,000 miles in a few minutes. He is now sanguine enough to think of arranging great electric lights in such order as to signal to the inhabitants of other planets. It is said that in the mountains of West Virginia a professor has

been listening to the hiss and thud of meteorites falling into our glorious sun.

To see that there has been progress in intellectual development we need only remember that from a few ideas the great field of thought has been developed and from a few words have grown hundreds of languages, and almost numberless dialects, many of which have been, through the art of learning, transcribed to tablets and books, until the civilized lands are flooded with multiplied millions of copies. Now the children of the poorer classes, along with the rich, can read their languages, and, through these readily obtainable books, converse with the intelligent thought of other lands and other ages.

That there has been moral progress at many intervals of the world's history is not to be denied. There were times when the inhabitants of the world, except a comparative handful, were barbarians. Sometimes man was in constant mortal dread for his life because of hostility on every hand of characterless individuals or marauding neighboring tribes. This accounts for the discoveries of homes and even cities in the seclusion of caves and excavations and in almost inaccessible positions under cliffs and against mountain sides. Many changes have taken place for the better. Man has ceased to rob and slay his fellow man, not because he is powerless or because he cannot find him, but because he has no longer any desire to do so. The husbandman can now enjoy the fruits of his labors because he need not spend almost his whole time in fortifying and defending himself against those who would still be enemies were it not for the progress of civilization.

But there is a specific use of the word *progress* which means retrogression. A church dignitary becoming disgusted with the impiety and growing immorality of his people indignantly exclaimed, To your

shame you are progressing backwards! The world has been no stranger to this kind of progress. While invention and discovery and application may have moved along with somewhat steady tread, though sometimes sadly hindered by many reverses and revolutions, intellect and morals were many times defeated and crushed until they appeared to be lost in the darkness of oblivion. This is especially true of the latter. Moral development has not kept pace with the intellectual. But usually when the moral has gone down the intellectual has fallen with it.

It is a remarkable fact that in every age and in every place there has been no permanent and marked progress when immorality has held sway; but when morality flourished there was progress in every other virtue and in every desirable form of achievement. This proves conclusively that true progress depends on improvement that does more than bring conveniences to man, does more than develop man's intellect; it is a grace that *makes man better*.

So long as the chosen people of God walked in the purity of the statutes of the Most High, prosperity marked every step. But so soon as they violated the teachings of His law by yielding to the temptations of the idolatrous forms of worship of their heathen neighbors, reveling with them in luxury, idleness, and sensuality, they were on the down grade to ruin. At the time of her highest glory, when probably deep piety and faithfulness to the commands of God was most characteristic of Israel, Solomon could dazzle the Queen of the South with the greatness and grandeur of his splendid court, the beauty of the Lord's house, and the magnificence of the Holy City. A few hundred years of misrule by wicked kings found her people in chains of slavery in Babylon, her prophets sitting on the river's banks with their harps hanging upon the willows, mournfully saying, "How can we sing a song of Zion in a strange land?" Prosperity and release from

captivity came only when they returned to righteousness and the true worship of Jehovah.

Sometimes nations have adopted for their development what writers have been pleased to call culture—the culture which says, "Turn in upon yourself, and get and enjoy the best the world affords." This has made a life of elegance, luxury and ease, but it never yet made a character which has lived in the world's esteem. It has made many brilliant periods in the life of nations, but never made one to which we can look back without shame. Take Greece for an example. It was the home of beauty. Its architecture was the model of elegance and taste. Its literature has come down to the present day, bearing the dignity of the name "classical." It is read by all who would study the finest models of style. But the moral element died out of this culture, the grossest forms of vice more and more prevailed. Greece became like a gorgeous palace, glittering with beautiful display, gilded and tapestried, with carpets of velvet and couches of ease; a palace whose tables were spread with luxurious and dainty viands, but a palace in which the devotees of pleasure lay day after day, enfeebled with debauchery and indulgence. In the language of a modern writer: "The proper epitaph of Greece is, 'Died of Self'."

Egypt is another of the countries which has astonished the world with its marvelous evidences of progress. For hundreds of miles the land has been found to be a great store-house of relics which tell of science and arts and literature at so early an age as to strike with wonder the interested explorer of antiquities. But why, in the face of all this evidence of former prosperity, are now found misery, ignorance, and poverty among the masses of her population? The answer may be, Wealth and luxury, followed by indolence and a low standard of morals.

Another illustration is Italy during the period of the Revival of Learning. The dark ages had closed, and a

new enthusiasm had developed in the study of the ancient classics. Antiquity was ransacked. The arts were revived. The poets of Greece and Rome were made to sing again. Men have called the period which followed an age of culture. It was an age of one-sided culture, an age of luxury and literature. But this brilliant civilization was built on selfishness, on the idea of getting the most out of life for enjoyment and ease. History tells the sequel by proclaiming this as the grossest and basest era to which she bears record. The life of the time was leavened with no Christian principle. The religion of the people had lost its evangelical elements of service and sacrifice, and was powerless. Such was the age—the most brilliant that Italy had ever seen since the days of imperial Rome, most brilliant and most base. The first army that crossed the Alps swept the enfeebled nation at its will. Such was the outcome of a Godless civilization built on the avowed principle of getting the most possible out of life.

An ably edited article treating of this age, says, "Important as the Revival of Learning undoubtedly was, there are essential factors in the Renaissance with which it can but remotely be connected." Let us remember that the two are not to be confounded. Their work and their effect are widely different. Naturalism and humanism did their disastrous work in the Revival of Learning. Says the same writer, "Love is treated from a frankly carnal point of view. Bacchus and Venus go hand in hand as in the ancient anti-christian age. The open air enjoyments of the wood, the field, the dance upon the village green, are sung with juvenile light-heartedness. No grave note, warning us that the pleasures of this earth are fleeting, that the visible world is but a symbol of the invisible, that human life is a probation for the life beyond, interrupts the tinkling music as of castanets and tripping feet which gives a novel charm to these unique relics of the 13th century." "Humanism, which was the

The *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is published quarterly by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church and distributed to the members of the Mennonite Historical Association. **Editor:** Leonard Gross; **Book Review Editor:** Gerald C. Studer; **Office Editor:** Rachel Shenk; **Production and Design:** Carl Lind; **Associate Editors:** Rafael Falcón, Jan Gleysteen, Merle Good, Amos B. Hoover, Albert N. Keim, James O. Lehman, Winifred Paul, Steven D. Reschly, Lorraine Roth, Shirley Showalter, Wilmer Swope, and J. C. Wenger. Dues for regular membership (\$5), contributing membership (\$10-50), supporting membership (\$50-100), sustaining membership (\$100-250), and sponsoring membership (\$250 and above) per year may be sent to the editor. (Library rate: \$5 per year.) Articles and news items should be addressed to the editor, 1700 S. Main Street, Goshen, Indiana 46526 (Tel. 219/533-3161, Ext. 477).

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*. Microfilms of Volumes I-XLIV of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from: University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

vital element in the Revival of Learning, consists mainly of a just perception of the dignity of man as a rational, volitional being, born upon this earth with a right to use and enjoy it." This was culture, the central principle of which was not love—the impulse and effort to give and to bless others—but selfishness that wrought out its legitimate but mournful results.

Just now the Renaissance was blossoming into the Reformation. European intellect was reformed and along with it the European conscience. The spirit of real progress was about to strike off the chains that held in slavery a multitude of unwilling subjects. With all the corruption



John S. Coffman

connected with the Revival of Learning, the schools and universities of Europe opened the Bible; and once more the pious seeker after truth saw an open Gospel of Christ. Yes, the Revival of Learning, with all that is claimed in its favor, made possible, or was at least followed by the dark blot on the page of history which records the horrors, the treacheries, the indescribable tortures, and the murders of the French Revolution.

But along with the Revival of Learning the Renaissance was what its name implies—a *new birth*. The open Gospel in the schools of Europe burned the truth of Christian piety into the hearts of learned and noble leaders, whose moral power and eloquence touched the souls of multitudes and kindled a fire which

threatened to sweep the continent. This was indeed a new birth, but not in the sense of discovering a new religion. It was simply a bounding forth, a broadening out, a wafting on the winds, a moral force whose progress had been held in check by the power which closed the Bible to the common people, enslaved them to a wily priestcraft, and gave to the world a thousand years of intellectual and moral darkness. This was simply bringing to light the truth which had been maintained since the days of Constantine—even the time of the apostles—by dissenters to the state churches. These little bands of despised and persecuted Christians were sometimes entirely annihilated; and when a few escaped they were driven into seclusion among the valleys and mountains, and rocks and caves of the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the Apennines. For many years these pious dissenters were known as Catherites, "pure ones;" but later by many different names—Paulicans, Henricans, Petrobrusians, Waterlandians, Albigensians, Waldensians, etc. With them, crushed, and bleeding, and despised as they were, slumbered the spirit of progress like the dormant fires of an inactive volcano, ready to burst forth at any unsuspected moment.

The time had now come! The lull in active persecution had given time for those who served God from a true conscience to take hope. They could now look back and rejoice anew with the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem in the birth of the world's Redeemer. They could now feel a thrill of joy as they beheld a revival of that spirit of progress which had been ushered upon the world accompanied by the song of angels proclaiming "peace on earth, good will to men." The mists were scattering, and the Light which had shown in splendor for a time, and had then been shrouded for centuries by the cloak of ecclesiasticism, was again brightening the world. Of this Light Thomas McKellar sings:

"The morning of the centuries
Beheld a light arise,
That in their heavenly ministries
Ne'er fell on angels' eyes.

"Through all the ancient days it seemed
A planet new begun;
It grew in fullness till it beamed
A sun beyond the sun.

"When earth with clouds of sin was dark,
It made an open way;
E'en where it glimmered as a spark,
Some souls received the ray;

"And they became the sons of God
Amid a scoffing race;
While bloody was the way they trod,
His peace lit up their face.

"They sealed their constancy with blood;
And where the martyrs died
A multitude arose and stood
and God was glorified.

"Till centuries shall be no more,
Its light shall not grow dim;
And Christ's redeemed on heaven's shore
Shall sing redemption's hymn."

Splendid, indeed, now began to seem the figure of Peter Waldo at Lyons and those of his successors, who in the valleys of Piedmont and Dauphiny had suffered for their hope. To this noble and self-sacrificing life over 300 years before it was no doubt due that the "sky of France was now full of morning light." His great work of translating the Scriptures in the tongue of the common people, and giving to all classes the advantage of Bible knowledge, had planted seed that was ripening into fruitfulness in the city and country, even in the University of Paris. Of the learners from Waldo, a Roman Catholic author who had been an inquisitor writes: "Among all the sects there is none more destructive to the Catholic church than the Leonists (Waldenses). This is true for three reasons. (1) Because its origin is the most ancient: some say they have existed since the time of Sylvester (who was bishop of Rome at the time of Constantine); others that they date back to the apostles. (2) Because they are the most widely spread. There is scarcely any country where they are not found. (3) Because while other sects by their great blasphemies against God terrorize and drive away their hearers, this sect of Leonists show forth a high degree of piety. Before men they live a just life, believing all the goodness of God and all the articles of faith in the Apostles' Creed; only they blaspheme against the Roman church and its clergy." Ah, it was the spirit of progress in Peter Waldo, in John Huss, in Peter de Bruys and their heroic followers that made them offensive to those who understood not his spirit. That they dared to assert the authority of the New Testament Scriptures above the traditions of the

clergy, and that they should apply Gospel teaching as a rule of faith and practice, was considered the veriest heresy. According to the laws of both state and church in all countries, adherence to the Waldensian faith was considered a crime punishable by death. Consequently those reformers who, about A.D. 1520, and later, taught an open Bible, liberty of conscience, a holy life according to the Scriptures, separation of church and state, fell under the same condemnation with the Waldensians of earlier date.

A high standard of progress was set up by these dissenters about the time the Reformation assumed full sway. It was, however, only a return to the simple teachings of the New Testament Scriptures. Among the number were many of the most learned men of that day, and a great number of the most pious and zealous defenders of Christianity.

A revival of the doctrines taught by the ancient Waldenses took place about the year 1523, at Zurich, Switzerland, where a large congregation was organized. Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, both learned men, together with George Blaurock, William Reublin, and others, were not satisfied with the teachings and practices of the Swiss reformer and founder of the State Church. They did not consider his reformatory ideas sufficiently thorough. His looseness in church government was especially offensive to them. They claimed the church should be composed entirely of converted persons who lived saintly lives, and that all who failed to do this should be denied communion with God's people. About this time Hans Denck, of Bavaria, a brilliant light of the University of Ingolstadt, taught the same doctrine, and published a number of excellent Waldensian books and other documents showing his faith to be the same as that of the Swiss brethren. He came to Augsburg and found a congenial companion in the learned Dr. Hubmeyer. At Worms, Denck met Ludwig Haetzer and Jacob Kautz, both learned and influential men and able ministers. These men, so far from opposing learning and education, translated the prophetic books of the Bible from the Hebrew language into the German, and published a number of editions about five years before Luther's translation

appeared.

About 1531 Menno Simons, then a Catholic priest, began to study the Scriptures, being impressed with the heroism and piety of some martyrs who died for advocating their teachings, and became convinced of his lost condition, repented, and was later baptized. He preached the same doctrine with Denck, Dr. Hubmeyer, and other Swiss brethren who had taken up the Waldensian order of teaching the Scriptures and applying them to their lives. Finally Simons became identified with these Swiss brethren. Professor de Hoop-Scheffer of Amsterdam states that "before 1550, of all the non-Catholic religious authors of Holland not one wrote so much as Menno." Because of his great zeal and ability, and the wide range of his travels and work, a large portion of the dissenters to the State Church, who accepted the Bible doctrines as taught by the Waldensians, were derisively called Mennonites. We were at first simply brethren in Christ, but our nickname was finally used by our own people, and, to all appearances, has come to stay.

Dr. Max Goebel, a theologian and historian of the Reformed church, wrote a most excellent work in 1844-1851, which is distinguished for impartiality toward all sects and creeds. Of the non-resistant brethren, afterward called Mennonites, he says:

"The real substance and distinguishing features of these people consists in the great stress which they put upon actual personal conversion and regeneration by the Holy Ghost, of every Christian; on perfect liberty of conscience and freedom in worship; on entire separation of spiritual and worldly things—church and state; on representing and establishing a true, holy Christian congregation of the regenerated, through a special covenant of the believers, in which all things worldly and sinful are to be kept aloof by Christian discipline and the use of the ban; and in which the Christian principles of true brotherly love by liberal giving and supplying of one another's needs, and by a non-resistant and revengeless life are actually carried into effect. They aimed especially at a full and thorough execution and application of the doctrines of Christ in the heart and life of every individual in the congregation; and consequently there should be an organization of

true believers into a pure and holy congregation. That which the Reformation was originally intended to accomplish they aimed to bring into full realization without delay in every individual Christian, thus forming a congregation organized in accordance with Scripture teaching alone, and directed only by the Holy Spirit, rather than by the officers of government and the opinions of men." The same writer says, "Luther reformed doctrine; Calvin reformed the manner of worship—clearing the churches of images, musical instruments, etc.; and the Mennonites reformed the life."

Prof. J. W. Baum, of the Reformed Theological Seminary, of Strassburg, [at that time, part of] Germany, says: "Aside from a number of erroneous views and principles their only fault was that they lived three hundred years too early."

Of their sufferings for these advanced principles I will quote only one sentence from a late history by S. W. Pennypacker, of Philadelphia, Pa. "There were nearly as many martyrs among the Mennonites in the city of Antwerp alone as there were Protestants burned to death in England during the whole reign of 'bloody' Mary."

The spirit of progress in the line of education was not wanting among the Waldenses, Swiss brethren, or the early Mennonites. They were especially anxious to have their children learn to read that they might know the teachings of the Bible and be so firmly established in the truths of Christianity that they could defeat in argument any one who would dare to attack their doctrine. Few people at any age were generally so well versed in the Scriptures.

They took advantage of the schools whenever practicable. The Mennonites of Holland established a university at Amsterdam in 1737 which is still in existence. Menno Simons himself owned a printing press when there were yet very few in operation; and to this press we are largely indebted for the little Waldensian and early Mennonite literature still extant, which was not destroyed by merciless persecutors.

Persecutions against these non-resistant people were so severe, from the combined efforts of at least four classes of professed Christians, that their spirit of progress appeared

almost entirely crushed. Indeed many of those who escaped the ravages of persecution lived so secluded, so much isolated from the learned that they lost all interest in education further than to be able to read and write so as to transact business pertaining to their farms and to their looms. But not so with all. Books were published and schools maintained at intervals all along down their history. The first book on the Theory and Practice of Teaching ever published in America was the work of that pious Mennonite teacher, Christopher Dock, at Skip-pack, Montgomery Co., Pa., in one of the first Mennonite churches erected in America. This little volume was published by Christopher Sauer, in 1770, and a few copies are still in the country.

That the Mennonites in America were not averse to learning and the publication of books is fully attested by the fact that so early as 1745, amid all the disadvantages of those times and the great expense that it entailed, they undertook and accomplished, in Lancaster county, Pa., the translation from the Holland language into German and its publication the large work known as *Martyr's Mirror*. An edition of 1,300 copies was issued in large folio form. Many of the books are yet to be found in Mennonite families, bound in heavy oak boards covered with strong leather, which seems almost as indestructible as an Egyptian mummy. A curious contravention marks an epoch in the history of these books. In the war of the Revolution a number of unbound copies were captured by British soldiers. Paper was a scarce article then. Those very pages which had printed upon them a history of God's suffering people and their principles of faith, which were "no war, no violence, no bloodshed," were used to make cartridges with which to kill people.

Progress in the publication of our own literature was surely very slow for over one hundred years. Yet *Martyr's Mirror* was translated into English, and a considerable edition published in 1837; and several smaller books appeared occasionally. But it was only 33 years ago that this line of work received new impetus by the establishment of a church paper, followed soon after by a publishing house in the direct interest of the church. Since then a number of

periodicals have been established which appear regularly, and a great number of volumes, large and small, have been produced in rapid succession. The publishing interest appears to be firmly established.

Progress in education was also very slow. Since good Christopher Dock died at his desk on his knees in prayer, in the meeting house where he held his school 125 years ago, few, if any, Mennonite congregations have used their houses of worship for school. Had the church followed up the openings which were presented in educational advantages, and cultivated the spirit of learning which her people originally possessed, we might be a people famed for learning; and our congregations might number thousands where we now count only hundreds. Whatever other forces may have operated against us and caused the number of our people to remain comparatively small, it is certain, beyond question from any observant Mennonite, that one great reason has been the want of intelligent, educated teaching in the English language. The spirit of progress was in the church, but it was lying in great part dormant. Her ideals of character were the highest, her opposition to immorality was the most marked, her censure of irreverence was the most severe, in short her application of Scripture truth to daily life was the doctrine of Christ most beautifully exemplified; but the teaching was too long continued in a language (the German) in which the younger generation had received very little education. Those who became educated in the English language were almost always lost to the church. Because of this some of our most noble-hearted people finally became opposed to education.

The Elkhart Institute, with its corps of able teachers, its new, commodious building, and this formal opening exercise, which, all taken together, forms but a speck on the great educational field of this broad land, is after all an evidence of the spirit of progress among us in the line of education.

This is but a welling up of a pent-up stream that could no longer be suppressed. Disadvantages, opposition, fears of failure, all had to give way before the force that was driven into action by the deep consciousness of duty to God, to the church, to our young people, and to the cause of

Christ in general.

Here we are at an epoch that marks a transition period in our beloved brotherhood. It is really a final crossing over of a large body of our people, the way having been gradually prepared, from the German language into the language of the country.

What will be the result of this transition? We fear and tremble as we think of what might be. Let us never say there is no danger! Only the true spirit of progress given, and directed, and kept by the power of God will form a pavilion round about us in which we can dwell in safety from the encroachments of popular opinion and worldly aspirations that will come dashing against us with the fury of a sweeping cyclone. Jehovah will preserve us. But on the other hand we are thrilled with pleasure as we paint in our mental vision the beautiful picture of a multitude of young men and women going out from this institution, the mind stored with knowledge, trained to make the best of all their faculties, possessed of a will to do right that will acknowledge no defeat, armed with a character that will never shrink from maintaining true principles, a trust that relies solely on the favor of God for success.

One reason why we know that this effort at higher education is encompassed with dangers is because the generally accepted standard of Christianity is far below the Bible standard. Efforts will be made by well-meaning people to lower the standard for the sake of pecuniary and social advantages. Will we yield or will we stand by the Bible standard at the expense of being considered narrow, needlessly conscientious, or even ignorant? We must be as true as steel. We are in an age when ease, laughter, entertainment, and pleasure are considered culture. This is the highest aim of multitudes. The culture of a consecrated heart and a self-sacrificing spirit are by too many considered out of date. When from this position we take a step downward we find ourselves in a moral stratum where sin, and darkness and death reign. Have we not the spirit of progress in sufficient measure to pierce this cheerless gloom? It is not presuming too much to suggest that this Institute should be like a light upon a stately tower, casting luster far below among the shadows. We might do well to adopt, at this late day, the old Waldensian watchword,

Lux lucet in tenebris,

"Let light shine into the darkness."

We should permit nothing to prevent us from maintaining the high standard of Christian life that has been defended by the teachings of our Mennonite people through their whole history. We must still teach that the standard of Christianity is so high that the converted man is a true man, that his "yea" means *yea*, and his "nay" means *nay*, "that his word is as good as his bond," that he fulfills all his obligations righteously, even if he could by a technicality of the civil law avoid doing so, and thereby secure some pecuniary benefit, that he would be horrified at the thought of swearing profanely, that he is too true to be required to swear a judicial oath. We must still teach that Christianity comprehends a charity too broad and far-reaching to be bounded by organizations, societies, cliques, or leagues. That it in itself enforces virtue and temperance, so that these graces will live because of their own beauty and because of the happiness they bring to their possessor. It is as true as ever that ambitious aspirations are contrary to the exhortation which says, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." A haughty disposition and pride of position, pride of family relation, pride of personal appearance and of personal attraction are as destructive to a noble Christian spirit as ever they were. The spirit that seeks pleasure only in entertainment and amusement is as degenerating now as in the times of the Reformation. Hatred and revenge, and retaliation are as far below the true ideal of progress as when Christ said, "Love your enemies, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." These are doctrines that must be taught, notwithstanding the fact that many good people claim they can never be maintained in an institution of learning.

Sometimes it appears to us that the professed Christian world is slowly learning at least some of these doctrines for which the few have contended through all the Christian age. The recent war threat with regard to the Venezuelan question has demonstrated the fact that great numbers of noble men and women look upon war as the work of bar-

barians—a thing impossible between Christian nations. When the chaplain of the United States House of Representatives prayed, "O Lord, may we be quick to resent anything like an insult to our nation; so may the kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," Chauncey M. Depew in a speech shortly after said, "Such an appeal to the Prince of Peace is a travesty on the Sermon on the Mount." The last week of January, 1896, a petition representing 300,000 persons in the United States was sent to each legislator at Washington, earnestly protesting against the passage of any measure which aims to provide military instruction in the public schools of the country.

The occasional World's Peace Congresses, in recent years, where representatives of all the civilized nations are pleading for the "beating of swords into plowshares," for the settling of all disputes between nations by arbitration, for the reign of universal peace, are but an enlarging of the cloud of witnesses which has been hanging as a "man's hand" in the religious sky for centuries. May it soon break upon the nations with such a deluge of love that will cause even bleeding Armenia to look up with joy and say, "Behold, at last the Prince of Peace reigneth."

The blessed Bible, which has been ruled out of so many schools, colleges, and universities, must have a place in the Elkhart Institute. Along with other branches of learning its precepts must be vigorously taught—not as denominational peculiarities, but as the highest principles. May God grant that according to its teachings the true spirit of progress may be exemplified in the character and life of the officers and teachers of this humble institution! There is a Name above every name. It is the name of One on whom we can lean when human agencies fail. By faith we can follow Him successfully through our earthly pilgrimage. With Him we can safely walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Of Him the faithful shall receive a blessed eternal reward. In His name may the Elkhart Institute live and prosper—the name of *Jesus*, *JESUS*.

Source: John S. Coffman, *Mennonite Evangelist*, by M.S. Steiner (1903), 112-30.

Conversations with Elizabeth Bender IV

On the Writing of the "Anabaptist Vision" (23 March 1983)

Leonard Gross: What gave Harold Bender the daring to write the *Anabaptist Vision* in nontheological, nondoctrinal terms? Would a Robert Friedmann have been undergirding him on that?

Elizabeth Bender: I doubt it. Not consciously. Not consciously, because he dashed that thing off in no time at all. I know that Friedmann was not standing over his shoulder—I mean that figuratively, of course. That was *his*, whatever he had already absorbed from Friedmann and from Ernst Correll, etc.

Gross: And Walther Köhler, his Heidelberg professor?

Bender: And Köhler, yes, was already there and that is his *own* work. I am sure of that because I was just amazed how he got that whole thing done and ready to give that speech—was it in New York?—in no time at all: two or three days.

Gross: December 1943, at the annual meeting of the American Society of Church History. The time was ripe for that to come together.

Bender: Yes.

Gross: Could he have written the *Anabaptist Vision* in 1927, the year he founded the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*?

Bender: No! No, he couldn't have done that in 1927. No, no. He wouldn't have had the insights yet and wouldn't have had as firm ground under his feet. The church was still much more torn on what dare we do and what daren't we do and what can we say and what can't we say, etc. That couldn't be very productive. But gradually that ground under their feet strengthened and firmed up. Not in 1927, but maybe by 1935 he might have written something like that.

Gross: Now what do you mean, as the ground strengthened under his feet?

Bender: Well, the church situation. It was so precarious—are they going to shut Goshen down again or aren't they? You would have to be so careful of every little step that you

didn't offend somebody. That is a negative approach and it is very hard to live under that kind of circumstance.

Gross: Was that a repressive element?

Bender: Repressive? Yes, it was. It is repressive to have to live that way even if we don't specify any particular side doing the oppressing. Of course, Harold was not as liberal as the Bluffton and the earlier Goshen professors were. He believed in the atonement—never questioned that. He never wavered on the atonement. I know personally, in his personal faith, that was rock bottom. And so it influenced his relationship with the others. He carried on a long correspondence with J.E. Hartzler, I remember, in the early days. I suppose that correspondence is extant somewhere.

Gross: Would it be fair to say that we had something of a McCarthy era?

Bender: Yes, on one side, that is true. That is what McCarthyism was, I guess. Yes, it was something like that—a very suspicious and . . . let's see, who was that from Missouri—that said so many notable or notorious things. Names. Names just flit away—you know very well who they are, but you can't remember them.

Gross: What did he say?

Bender: Well, I can't give you any particular quotation, but everything that he saw at Goshen called for adverse comment. No credit given at all to the spirit—he would have been incapable of seeing the spirit or feeling the spirit. It wasn't the way he felt and therefore there was no sympathy for it at all. No understanding for it. He was not characteristic of the other side, though. He was the most extreme that I remember of the theologians—not so much the historians—the historians, not at all, but some theologians, yes.

Gross: The historians were not in this camp, you are saying.

Bender: The historians were not in the conservative camp. But there were historians in the liberal camp.

Gross: I believe you once told me there was a lot of bickering at Goshen College before it closed.

Bender: Yes. Oh, yes. Spiritually, let's say—I don't mean religious-spiritually—but in spirit, it was in turmoil. See, poor H.F. Reist had to come in for I forget how long—half a

year or a year—as president, and then Dan Kauffman. He never quite reconciled that year in Goshen with his own interests and wishes and faith.

Gross: As a student you experienced something of that turmoil?

Bender: I experienced it, yes.

Gross: Already in 1918?

Bender: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes, you can't be a senior in the school and not be aware of the troubles.

Gross: So cantankerousness can come from both the conservative and liberal sides?

Bender: Yes. On both sides it exists. Yes. Yes, that is right. I hadn't thought of that, but it is true.

Gross: After Goshen reopened, S. C. Yoder and Noah Oyer and Harold Bender and John Umble and the others that were brought into the new faculty: how would you compare the spirit after 1924, to what had been before?

Bender: There was no turmoil within the college after it reopened. There were occasional differences of opinion, of course; when you have adults together, there are. But the students knew where people stood. It was an altogether different atmosphere when it reopened. As I said, Sanford Yoder and Noah Oyer were both very gentle people to deal with. I don't mean they didn't have their opinions. But they wouldn't seek a fight with anybody.

Gross: Would it be fair to say that Harold Bender circumvented the theological and the doctrinal approaches?

Bender: Well, maybe that has something to do with it because the theology, or doctrinal, was at the basis of the trouble. The most conservative didn't know much about theology but a lot about doctrine, especially the outward doctrines. They knew they were experts (laughs).

Gross: Say more about that—they knew they were experts.

Bender: Everything they wrote was on those lines. And practically all they said, too, was along those doctrinal lines. For instance, you know that I said to J.B. Smith, well, bonnets after all aren't mentioned in the Bible, specifically, that women's headwear must only be bonnets. "Oh yes!" was the answer, "They are in the Old Testament: the Lord says, 'I will take away their bonnets'" (laughs).

Gross: Now why is it that Daniel Kauffman's name is not mentioned along with the crusading firebrands, and yet he was at the center of a Mennonite era, filled with suspicion and the throwing of firebrands?

Bender: It was his nature. He was, without question, a unifying spirit in his day among the Old Mennonites, in our branch of the church, including his contributions as editor of the *Gospel Herald*, etc.

Gross: So Daniel Kauffman was a positive force for the church.

Bender: Yes. In the long run, totally. Yes, he was a positive force. The beginning of Mennonite General Conference in our church in 1898 was a *big* boost for the Mennonite Church and I don't know anybody else that could have done it in those early days. And then who was going to be the editor of the *Gospel Herald*? It had to be a man with that kind of spirit, who doesn't toss firebrands around.

Gross: So his was a moderating influence?

Bender: Yes, he was moderating. I am sure of that, although now we would have classified him as being very conservative, but it may be because he came from Missouri and that is the way the church was, there. He was converted of course, as an adult—he had been in the public school system before that, and so maybe his wider experience in the world gave him some of that tact which I often felt was extreme, but looking back over it now, I see that it was beneficial for the period.

Gross: We had an era you basically lived through, from 1898 to 1944, that was strictly Doctrinal, with a capital D. There was an era before that, the Funk era, that was not Doctrinal, but was Christianity as faith and history, defined by discipleship, community and love. In fact, this idea goes all the way back to 1525. We had our legalisms in those early eras, and had all sorts of problems as the quiet in the land, but it was not Doctrine that was the problem, with a capital D—systematized propositional truth; it was rather Christianity as faith and history. But then we abruptly enter our Doctrinal era in 1898. Since 1944 we have slowly but surely moved out of that. Paul Erb helped in this regard, in his own, quiet way, to change the *Gospel Herald*.

I am wondering about this thesis of



Daniel Kauffman, ca. 1913. "A positive force for the church . . . a unifying spirit."

the Doctrinal era. What is the term? There was a time, "before which" and "since which."

Bender: Yes. Maybe the word you want is interlude.

Gross: A doctrinal interlude.

Bender: Yes. I think that is valid. I think that is a very good analysis. Some people aren't over the one yet, on both sides, I guess, but that characterizes the church pretty largely. There are still extreme Fundamentalists who are Doctrinal: very strong on the Doctrinal. And there are those, probably on the liberal side too. But that will always be true. That doesn't invalidate your thesis at all.

Gross: In your own words, how would you say that, what I have just said? Or is that not a fair question?

Bender: Yes, it is a fair question, only I can't do it. Before '98 there was—through Funk, I think—a little dawning of the historical sense. Just a dawning there. I know that my father acquired a lot of historical books that Funk paid for, or the publishing company paid for, and Funk encouraged my father to write articles about historical subjects in the *Herald of Truth* and *Herold der Wahrheit*. Funk didn't belong to them at all, it seems to me, that is, to the Doctrinal side. He had had too much experience in Chicago with spiritual movements and had a much wider outlook. I think of the divisions in Elkhart County, here in Indiana, that Funk figured in, and the rest of them. Then after Funk, came the capital-D—mostly-external doctrines, with much

more emphasis on them than on tenets of faith—than on spiritual tenets of faith. (Pause.) That's right. I really hadn't thought of analyzing it in that way—that that emphasis did prevail pretty strongly until about the time of the discipleship dominance. Yes, and everything during that Doctrinal era: even spiritual truths were twisted to fit the external doctrines, the outward doctrines. As I have mentioned before, I remember ——— giving a speech in young people's meeting, saying, we must be simple because God is simple. That is next to blasphemy!

Gross: Why did Harold, and why did you, stay with the church during the 1920s, when there didn't seem to be much hope on the horizon?

Bender: I suppose we were dyed-in-the-wool Mennonites. I don't think that Harold, or I, was even tempted to go somewhere else. We never weighed or discussed the problem. We would sign the paper in 1924, reaffirming "our loyalty to the principles of the Mennonite Church," and our willingness "to work in harmony with the rules and regulations of the Indiana-Michigan Conference, and to maintain the vital Christian principles for which the Church stands." We did this, even if it was half way against our conscience to do that too. Because we knew that act was putting a lot of people out of the Mennonite Church that shouldn't have been put out and should we approve of that? But we did sign because we thought the major good is keeping the church together. That is,

Goshen should be incorporated in the general Old Mennonite milieu.

Gross: Was that a fair statement at the beginning when I said, there did not seem to be much hope for the Mennonite Church at that point?—in the 1920s?

Bender: Well, there was a lot of discouragement. That is true. Of the seniors in my class, quite a number did not stay with the church. And those that did stay, I believe, all joined the General Conference Mennonite Church. There was J.N. Smucker and Raymond Hartzler. Hartzler was a minister in one of the churches around here, somewhere. He was a classmate. Of course most of the boys were in camps at that time. I think there were only those two graduating, and they and Harold because they were theologians; they were studying theology.

Gross: Well, things have changed since then and some of these same General Conference people who left the Old Mennonites are sort of back here again. Lester Hostetler and J. N. Smucker live right here in Goshen.

Bender: Yes. I think that is wonderful to see.

Gross: So in a sense all is well that ends well.

Bender: Even if there are wrongs in the middle of it—and before it all happened. Well, that is our life here. Nothing is crystal clear. In many things you can't just draw a line and say—on this side it is wrong, and on this side it is wrong again, but here is where you stand. On some things you have to, but on some things it is impossible in this world.

—To be Continued

Announcements

Translating. I will translate from German script into English. Please send xeroxed copies. Minimum charge - \$25 for first hour. \$10 for each additional hour. Estimates given. References upon request. Write to Isaac Clarence Kulp, 828 Main St., Harleysville, PA 19438.

Mennonite Historical Bulletin

Vol. XLVII

October, 1986

ISSN 0025-9357

No. 4

Homesteading on the Prairies

By Elizabeth Yoder Woodiwiss

Probably all homesteaders in North America had tales to tell their families and friends. Too few such accounts of Mennonite homesteaders, however, have survived in written form.

One unusually perceptive homesteader, Elizabeth Yoder (Woodiwiss), was also gifted in writing; in 1963 she placed on paper her memories of homesteading in North Dakota, exactly fifty years earlier, from December 1912 to the fall of 1915.

Elizabeth Yoder Woodiwiss was born on July 5, 1889, in the Big Valley—the Kishacoquillas Valley—in Pennsylvania, and lived there at Belleville until 1902, when as a thirteen-year-old she moved with her family to Surrey, North Dakota.

After her three years of homesteading, so well expressed in the account that follows, she married Hugh Woodiwiss, and they moved to Sawyer, North Dakota. Elizabeth tells something of this later story near the end of her account. Her husband, Hugh, died in 1944. Elizabeth later moved to the "East," to Elkhart, where she lived for the rest of her life.

In 1984, when we asked whether we might publish this account in the MHB, Elizabeth gave her permission, on the condition we publish the whole manuscript—which we of course intended to do in any case.

Elizabeth Woodiwiss died on January 13, 1986. We publish her account as a tribute to a brave woman, who obviously left her spirited imprint upon the lives of those around her, throughout her ninety-six years on this earth.

(Information, in part, from Maxine [Woodiwiss] Weaver, Elkhart, Indiana, daughter of Elizabeth Woodiwiss.)

—Leonard Gross

I

It was a big undertaking to start on a sixty-mile trip out over the North Dakota Prairies in one of the coldest months of the year, but we were young and strong, never thinking of dangers or the possibility of freezing to death in a blizzard or in below-zero weather.

I had always wanted a homestead of my own, but by the time I was

twenty-one the Government free land was all gone. But when the Fort Bert-hold Indian Reservation was opened for settlement, I was old enough and drew a lucky number which gave me the right to file on a homestead. Six months before we undertook this trip I had filed, and it was time to build my shack and start my residence.

One fine December morning, Curley the carpenter, my brother and I boarded father's prairie schooner loaded with stove, fuel, food, blankets and some furniture, and set out on the trip to the Reservation.



Elizabeth Yoder (Woodiwiss), eighteen years of age, in 1907.

When we left home in the morning we planned to reach a farmhouse before dark in the evening, where we could spend the night, but the weather changed our plans. Early in the afternoon, snow began to fall fast. The wind came up suddenly. A blizzard was on, no question about it, and we were miles from the farmhouse. It was dark.

We knew what a North Dakota blizzard was like; we had seen many of them. We became worried, and wished we had taken our parents' advice and stayed at home. We were lost like the sheep that went astray. It was quite frightening to be out there on the open prairie where there were no roads, only a trail to follow, and now the trail was covered with snow. Everything looked the same no matter which way we looked.

We were crossing a range of hills. We soon lost our way and sense of direction. Few people stayed in the Hills in winter, only cattlemen. Women and children went to town on account of schools. We drove on for sometime, wherever the horses chanced to take us. Then we saw a light in the distance. Naturally we headed for the light, thinking surely no one will turn us away in a blizzard, but we were disappointed.

When we drove up to the house, and before we could ask for a night's lodging, the man at the door said, "You can't stay here." But he also said, "There is an old empty sod shack half-a-mile from here where you may be able to put up for the night." We were desperate and glad for the hope of finding any kind of a shelter from the storm. We started for the shack. Sometimes we could see it; more often we could not because of the storm. We went up one hill and down another until we finally reached the shack. Our horses were worn out from pulling the heavy load through the snow which was getting deep.

The boys inspected the place and said, if our stove pipe would fit the chimney we were set for the night. We moved the stove in and provisionally it fit, so we moved in other things we needed and got ready to spend the night there. We cooked our supper by the light of a kerosene lantern. We were three hungry people, and no supper ever tasted better. We had only eaten a sandwich since we had eaten breakfast at home. It was too cold to stop to eat and there

were no eating places along the way.

The boys made the horses comfortable in one room and we stayed in another. The building had been used for a livestock shelter, so there was hay to feed the horses and a place for us to make bunks. It was not a clean place but it was a shelter from the storm and we were thankful for it. After supper we rolled up in our blankets for the night with pleasant dreams, expecting to continue on our journey early in the morning. The wind howled around the old shack all night. The timbers creaked and we wondered if we would get out of there alive.

When morning came the storm was still raging, so we had to stay there all day and another night. We kept busy firing the little stove, thawing food and preparing something to eat. We had plenty of food with us, but we ran out of fuel. We had taken some lignite coal along but because of the bulk and weight, we could not take much. After the coal was gone, the boys sawed timbers from an old broken-down barn nearby, and chopped them into stove-lengths, which supplied us with fuel.

At ten o'clock the second morning we left the old shack. We had not been comfortable there, but the old building kept us from freezing. It was a beautiful, clear, cold morning. Ten degrees below zero. The wind had gone down and the sun was shining brightly. The snow crunched under our feet as we walked out over the snow banks to the wagon.

Curley suggested we go back home. I said, "Go home? Never, until our work is done." My brother agreed with me. I could understand his wanting to go back, but there was no point in going back. It was the same distance either way and I knew if we ever turned back, we would never start out again and I could not afford to take a chance on losing my homestead.

The snow was deep, going was hard and slow on wheels, but we kept moving toward our destination. It was so cold icicles froze on the



The threshing crew, in front of the cook car Elizabeth worked on in 1913, "to earn enough money to build my [homestead] shack." (Elizabeth, second from right on the porch.)

horses' noses. The boys broke them off to make the poor animals a little more comfortable. Curley walked part of the time, holding on the side of the wagon until he got tired tramping through the snow, then he climbed into the wagon for a rest. My brother did the driving and I sat on a trunk in the back of the wagon wrapped in blankets. We had to fight the cold to keep from freezing. Sometimes my brother would call back to me, "Do you want to turn back now?" My answer was always, "No."

At five o'clock in the evening we could see the lights from our homestead town which gave us courage to keep going. We had traveled some twenty miles since we left the old sod shack in the morning. We had no trouble finding a night's lodging in a small hotel, also a livery barn where we left the horses to feed and rest.

Since we had had no dinner, a good supper at a restaurant was very much appreciated. After supper we went to the unheated hotel rooms for the night. The rooms were cold, but much better than the bunks in the old shack.

The next morning we traded wheels for sleds, which helped us to travel much faster. The horses had rested and were ready to go, so we

glided over the snow enjoying the sunshine, going the last thirteen miles to my brother's shack where we stayed while getting things ready to build my shack. My brother had built his shack in the fall while I worked on a cook car to earn enough money to build my shack.

Cook cars were something like today's housetrailer, but not as well built or as convenient. The thresherman pulled his cook car from farm to farm to have a place for his crew to eat their meals. Two girls worked on a cook car. Our working day started at 4:00 in the morning and ended at 10:30 at night if we were lucky. We served breakfast at 5:30, and at dawn the men were in the field pitching bundles and hauling them to the threshing machine. We served meals to around 30 men and sometimes more. In a good season we put in as many as 50 days on a cook car. Threshing machines and cook cars are a thing of the past since combines have taken over in the big wheat fields.

We were glad we had not turned back when the going got rough on our way to the reservation—although there were more hardships to face before my shack was built. But we were ready for them.

The boys went to town to get lumber and hardware for my shack

The *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is published quarterly by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church and distributed to the members of the Mennonite Historical Association. **Editor:** Leonard Gross; **Book Review Editor:** Gerald C. Studer; **Office Editor:** Rachel Shenk; **Production and Design:** Carl Lind; **Associate Editors:** Rafael Falcón, Jan Gleysteen, Merle Good, Amos B. Hoover, Albert N. Keim, James O. Lehman, Winifred Paul, Steven D. Reschly, Lorraine Roth, Shirley Showalter, Wilmer Swope, and J. C. Wenger. Dues for regular membership (\$5), contributing membership (\$10-50), supporting membership (\$50-100), sustaining membership (\$100-250), and sponsoring membership (\$250 and above) per year may be sent to the editor. (Library rate: \$5 per year.) Articles and news items should be addressed to the editor, 1700 S. Main Street, Goshen, Indiana 46526 (Tel. 219/533-3161, Ext. 477).

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*. Microfilms of Volumes I-XLIV of the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* are available from: University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

and took it to my homestead six miles from my brother's place. Because of the snow, they had trouble finding the corner stakes of my quarter but they managed to get the shack on the edge of the quarter.

I spent that day at my brother's shack preparing our Christmas dinner. For it was Christmastime! Christmas Day we stayed by the stove trying to keep warm. The only heater we had was a cook stove. The day was very cold—a Christmas we will remember. One of us had to keep the fire going all night, which was no small task with lignite coal. Everything froze but us; even the bread was frozen and had to be thawed in the oven before we could have a meal.

After Christmas we moved to a friend's shack a mile from where the boys worked on mine. How the boys worked out there on the open prairie in freezing weather, I will never know. At last my ten-by-twelve house was finished except the door was not hung and the windows were not in, but because we wanted to start home the next day the boys tacked blankets over the openings so I could spend a night in my shack to start my residence. No coyotes or other animals showed up to frighten me. It was rather risky to stay there alone, a mile from the boys, but that was my first taste of homesteading.

In the morning we hung the door, put in the windows, moved my furniture into the shack, had dinner there

and got ready to start back to town for the night. We were glad the work we had started out to do was finished and were proud of our accomplishment. We were completely out of fuel again and there were no old buildings or trees to chop down, or coal within many miles. Again the air was full of snow and we were afraid another blizzard was brewing, but by the time we covered the 18 miles to town the weather had cleared and stars were shining brightly. We spent another night in the hotel. By this time we were used to being cold so did not mind the cold rooms.

Early the next morning we had breakfast at a restaurant, then continued on our trip toward home. But we were due for more trouble. Everything went fine until around noon, when a Chinook wind came up and the snow began to disappear fast. It got so warm we did not need our topcoats. We were in bad shape without snow for our sleds. Never had we wanted snow so badly. How we wished for the wheels we had traded for sleds!

We tried to borrow a wagon at a farmhouse, but because we were strangers, the farmer turned us down. So we went on, trying to find snow along the roadside so we could keep going. We still had miles to go. Hours after dark, when we neared our hometown, we could see the lights which warmed our hearts and gave us courage to go on. At 8:00 we arrived in town, tired but happy.

After putting the horses in the livery barn we enjoyed our supper at a restaurant. We had had only a sandwich for lunch. At 9:00 we started on the last ten miles to our home. After sliding around in mud and what little snow we could find, we arrived at home near midnight. Every member of the family got up to welcome us. Soon the clock on the shelf struck the midnight hour and a new year began. For it was New Year's Day!

Needless to say our folks were happy to see us and were thankful we had not frozen to death. Their prayers had followed us and a Kind Providence watched over us. They had not heard from us the two weeks we were gone. There were no telephones near enough for us to use and no mail service.

Many more daring adventures lay ahead.

In the spring my brother and I went to our homesteads for the summer. There were many hardships living on the prairie in that new country, but we enjoyed life there and were very happy in our new homes.

Sometimes I walked the six miles to my brother's home, but because of open range which meant livestock was running loose on the prairie, it was taking a chance. There were very few shacks between our homes where one could stop to rest, and no trees to hide behind should some animal follow one, but I always made the trip safely. Because my brother lived alone like most homesteaders did, he was always glad to have me stay with him a few days to clean his house, do the laundry and prepare food to eat and of course, he enjoyed my company.

I had no water on my homestead for house use, so I carried water in a bucket from a neighbor's well a mile from my homestead, until I learned to dig seep wells near my lake with a posthole digger. The lake covered 48 acres. The little wells were three feet deep. I covered them with large, flat rocks I found around the lake. When insects or frogs got in I dug another. For laundry I used lake water.

There were badgers, coyotes, long-legged jackrabbits, skunks, weasels and hordes of gophers to keep me company. There were birds, too. My favorites were the meadowlarks.. They sat on my shack early every morning and woke me up with their merry tune. A perfect alarm clock! They built their nests on the ground



The homestead shack of Elizabeth's brother, six miles from her own homestead, ca. 1914.

and if the eggs or little birds escaped being eaten by weasels or other animals, they were very lucky.

At night I could hear the howl of coyotes which made me wish I were at home with mother. Gophers were so plentiful I could stand in my doorway and shoot them. They were such cunning little animals, but so destructive to grain fields and gardens. Gophers destroyed the garden I planted on the fireguard.

There was a six-furrow fireguard around the outside of each quarter section to guard against prairie fires. Sometimes a dreaded prairie fire broke out and burned over thousands of acres, destroying shacks, haystacks or anything in its path. When a fire broke out, it usually burned its course. It was almost impossible to get it under control before it reached the river. There were very few wells; there were some potholes which dried up during the summer.

Many mosquitos made life miserable, especially evenings. I made smudges with prairie grass which helped to control them, if I could stand the smoke. I had no screens on my door or windows, so had to keep the shack dark, evenings, because of insects.

Sometimes, skunks made their homes under buildings. I was afraid they might decide to camp under my house sometime when I was gone for a few days. My shack sat on blocks a foot high, an ideal place for animals to crawl under on a hot day. So I decided to dig a cellar beside my shack five feet square and deep enough to stand up in. It was hard work with pick and shovel, but fun too. When father came to the reservation he moved my shack on the cellar with horse power. He also anchored my shack by wiring large rocks on each corner and banking it with the ground from the cellar. Then I felt safe in a storm. We did have strong windstorms during the summer. Father sawed a hole in the floor and made a trapdoor to go to the cellar. I climbed down and up on a ladder I made from two-by-fours left from building the shack. I also made a cupboard for my dishes from scrap lumber.

My shack really looked like home with a rug on the floor, curtains on the windows, the little stove in one corner, a table, small kitchen cabinet, folding bed, two chairs, and a little rocking chair along the wall. It was a

full house, but my first very own home.

The second summer I was on my homestead one of my girlfriends from back home filed on a homestead directly across the road from mine. After she moved out there we spent most of our time together. We ate together, spent evenings together, dug rocks and seep wells together. In the cool of the evenings we walked out over our land and felt very much at home.

Some days were very hot. The only shade we had was the shadow of our shacks which was not much around noon, but the evenings were always nice and cool.

We did not see many Indians on the reservation. Once in a while a family, driving through from one reservation to another, would stop by. One day an Indian and his wife stopped at my brother's shack at dinner time. They came right into the house, helped themselves to food on the table, asked for a sack, put in all the food in sight and drove away. We let them take what they wanted. After all, they were Indians and we were taking their land. We could not understand their language, but we understood their gestures.

There was a nice Indian village by the Missouri River, 25 miles from where we lived, where we went camping. The Indians were very friendly, and welcomed us to their village. They lived in log shacks. We saw them drying meat over a fire on the ground, but we did not try eating any of it.

One summer, a group of fourteen young people from our home church came to the reservation to spend some time with us. They covered a hayrack with a tent and drove horses

the sixty miles. The group, my brother, a friend and I—seventeen of us—camped at the Indian village a few days. It took us half-a-day to make the trip to the Missouri River. It took a large amount of food to satisfy the appetites of seventeen people. Naturally the food situation concerned me because they looked to me to prepare it. The group brought some food along, including seven live hens, canned meat, fresh vegetables and bread, so with the meager supply on our shelves we got along all right. No one went hungry, but the last day we had to ration food to make it reach.

It took us another half-day to drive back to our homesteads.

On Sunday afternoon some of us walked two miles to church services in a little church on the old settlement. Finally, it was time for the group to go home. We all climbed on the wagon and went with them. It was a great trip. When they got back home, everyone was ready to go back to work. In a few days we went back to the reservation and work.

After the Garrison Dam was built, there was no more camping at the Indian village. The valley was flooded when the dam was opened. All the Indians were moved to other reservations. The village was under water. Some of the older Indians had lived there all their lives and it was a real hardship for them to give up their homes and start a new life elsewhere.

My brother had a small covered wagon and a good road team. We used to drive to our home to visit with our relatives during the summer. I was always happy when he said, "Get ready, we are going home for the weekend." It took us from early morning to late at night to drive the



The Levi B. Yoder family, which came to Surrey, North Dakota, in 1903. Picture taken in 1907. (Elizabeth Yoder [Woodiwiss], third from left.)



Sod house, 1897, in which the first services of the Milan Valley Mennonite Congregation, Jet, Oklahoma, were held. John C. Bontrager and his son, Abe.

sixty miles. Sometimes I made the trip alone in a top buggy, driving one horse. One time, my cousin and I made the trip with a team and lumber wagon. It took us almost two days. We had a half-way stopping place in the hills where we could stop for the night, and where we were always welcomed.

II

Soon after the turn of the century, years before my homestead days, my father and several other farmers decided to look around for cheap land where they could make homes for their families. They knew they would never be able to own homes, farming hilly, stony, rented farms in the Kishacoquillas Valley in Pennsylvania, because of the high price of land.

They visited many states, but found no cheap land to their liking until they stopped in North Dakota. There they bought land, some 90 miles south of the Canadian border. They moved their families to that new country on the prairies in the spring of the year. Moving was fun for us children who had no responsibility, but it was a hard experience for our parents to leave the valley they loved, and their many relatives. Our mothers left their large, comfortable homes to live in small houses with no conveniences, but they were brave women and made good homes for their children on the prairies.

We moved into a three-room sod house. There were ten in our family. By fall, three of them had moved

away. Before winter, father added another room to our house.

Outside, the sod house looked like a huge mound of earth, with windows in it, but inside it looked like any other house. The walls were lined with heavy building paper which was covered with wall paper. After we hung pictures on the wall, put curtains in the windows, covered the wooden floor with carpet and moved the furniture in we had brought from Pennsylvania, we felt very much at home.

The first winter was a hard one. On September 12th, we had a snow-storm and winter weather lasted until spring. What little crop we had was in stacks. The men shook the snow off of the bundles to thresh them, using a steam engine for power.

The first school we had was a tarpapered shack on a hill near our home. No winter school. Three months in the spring and the same in the fall was our school year.

For our winter's supply of coal the men drove teams of horses twenty miles to a lignite coal mine. They took two teams and if one got stuck in the snow, the other one was there to help him out. Sometimes they had to wait hours to get loaded, because there were teams ahead. The only heater we had was our cook stove. Years later, trucks delivered coal to our homes and we had good heating stoves. Toward spring the first winter we lived in North Dakota, a diphtheria epidemic broke out. Ten children in our neighborhood died. Only one was from our group.

We stayed at home closely. No one went to church or to a neighbor's house. The men went to town once a week to get the mail and what few groceries we needed. More than that, no one went anywhere. It was almost impossible to get a doctor to come to the country. There were only a few doctors in town. Roads were poor, snow was deep and these were the horse-and-buggy days.

When our group left Pennsylvania, we were an organized church of twenty members. We had our own newly ordained minister. We held services in a schoolhouse in town for some time, and later in a country schoolhouse until we were able to build a church. More families moved in from Pennsylvania and other states, and by the time we built the church, there were forty members. Later a number of churches were started in North Dakota, Montana and Minnesota, from this small beginning. Only a few charter members are living today [in 1963]. Most of them have gone to their reward.

III

In the fall, after I had lived the required length of time, seven months a year for three years, on my homestead, I received my deed from the United States Government. In those three, happy, carefree years, I learned many things about life on the prairies, where few people lived. Rather reluctantly I left my homestead, rented the land to a neighbor, who later bought it, and my homestead days were over. I spent the winter with my parents, and in the spring I married the man I had been acquainted with for some time. We took up housekeeping on his 280-acre farm where we lived for 26 years. My husband's mother lived with us two-and-one-half years until she died of cancer. The first summer we were married we bought our first car. We had to drive sixteen miles to church, nine miles to town and eighteen miles to where my relatives lived, so the car meant a lot to us even if we drove only thirty miles an hour at our top speed.

Sending our children to school across the prairie in winter was a constant anxiety. Most of the time they walked the one-and-one-half miles even in below-zero weather. If it was too cold and stormy we took them in a bobsled with a team of horses. We

never knew when a storm might come up. One winter in a nearby township, two brothers, ages twelve and fourteen, perished in a blizzard which came up suddenly when they were on their way home from school. No school buses to depend on in those days.

After our children finished grade school in the one-room schoolhouse in the country, they had to stay in town with relatives to go to high school.

We had a coulee on our farm one mile from our house. A coulee is a steep-walled, narrow valley. In the bottom of the coulee there were trees near a nice creek where we went for picnics and to pick berries and wild plums in season. Berry bushes and wild plum trees grew on the steep side hills. Sometimes we cooked supper in the coulee over an open fire on the ground and invited relatives and friends to eat with us. After supper, the children climbed the hills, picked wild flowers, watched birds and caught large turtles to play with and take along home for pets.

Some years the drought hit us hard. There were seasons when we had no harvest at all, not even feed for the livestock. Then the cattle were sold for whatever we could get for them. Some years when we did have rain the rust hit us. A beautiful field of headed wheat one day was a worthless, brown field the next, not even good for chicken feed. Those years we had to live on our savings if we had any; most farmers did not. Many farmers were on relief, and in hard circumstances for years. There were some years when we had good harvests, when we had rain and no rust. We had the finest gardens in the world in good years, but the dry years always came again. When we had good gardens we canned everything we could find because we never knew when we would have gardens again.

Many people left the country, those who had the means to get out, but the ones who stayed were the lucky ones. They managed to buy up the cheap land and after they learned how to farm this dry country, they prospered.

After my husband's health failed and the older children had gone East to work or to go to college, we sold the farm and moved to my hometown where I had grown up. After two-and-one-half years in town, my husband passed away. He, too, was a

cancer victim.

After his death, I kept welfare children and boarders in my home to keep my three youngest children in school. The youngest was thirteen.

Four years later, all my children except my youngest son had gone East, so I decided to sell our town property and to go East too.

Now at more than three score years and ten, I live in a modern home, a far cry from a shack on the North Dakota Prairie but I often find myself longing for the North Dakota prairies and the freedom of the West.

—Elkhart, Indiana
(February 18, 1963)

Letter to Theodore Roosevelt, Ca. 1900

This letter is in the John F. Funk Collection at the Archives of the Mennonite Church. Funk did not date the letter, but it was most likely written in 1900, two years after the Spanish-American War, when Theodore Roosevelt, Governor of New York, was running for Vice President on President McKinley's successful campaign ticket for reelection. The letter contains Funk's response to a speech, apparently given by Gov. Roosevelt, concerning nonresistance. The letter also contains information about Mennonites and politics at that time.

—J. Kevin Miller

To His Excellency, [Theodore]
Roosevelt, Governor of New York.

Dear Sir: I have received an extract from some of the weekly papers, which refers to a certain speech made by your Excellency, which is said to refer to such people as Mennonites, Dunkards, Quakers, etc., who believe that according to the word of God it would not be right for them to bear arms and destroy human life.

As the language is not quite clear to my mind I would ask you kindly to give me an explanation on this point, that is, whether in your speech you had referred to persons in general, or only to such as make it an article in their faith not to bear arms.

I am a Mennonite. I am a native of this Country. My people were Mennonites and American citizens for five generations. Now it seems to me if your speech refers to these nonresistant religious denomi-

nations, it would at best in my estimation [be] a pretty hard thing for this government to drive out of this Country its nonresistant people. You say, "A man that will not [fight] for his rights can give no good reason why he should be entitled to the privilege of living in a free Country."

This strikes us hard. We are American citizens, and we shall have no right to live in a free country, because we follow the teachings of Christ? Does this not sound like in the days of the persecutions? But I think you have been misunderstood, or else have failed to express yourself in clear language.

There are probably about 200,000 people of this faith in the United States and from that you can tell about how many voters there are in that number of population. And I am glad to say that probably 90 percent are Republicans. But if this report should go out that you held this view that the nonresistant people should have no rights in this land, then it would make many [people] consider what they should do. It would make our hearts feel sad to think that our people should have to vote for a vice president who would take this boon of being a free people from them. But I will not anticipate.

Will you kindly write and give a clear expression of your sentiments on this subject and your feeling towards our noncombatant people?

I shall be glad to help clear up this matter, should I find that the sentiments expressed by you were wrongly understood.

Hoping to hear from you by return mail, I am truly yours,

John F. Funk
Pastor of the Mennonite
Church in Elkhart, and Editor
of the *Herald of Truth*.

To Gov. Roosevelt, Albany, N.Y.

Book Reviews

Edward, Pilgrimage of a Mind.
Edited by Ida Yoder. Published by
Ida Yoder, 180 Hall Drive,
Wadsworth, OH 44281 and Virgil
E. Yoder, 110 Northumberland
Road, Irwin, PA 15642. 1985. Pp.
482. \$20.00.

Edward is the journal of Edward Yoder between the years of 1931 and his death in 1945. It places on exhibit

the perceptive mind and heart of an unusually taciturn man. I never knew Edward Yoder, even though I was for 12 years pastor of the congregation where his wife and only son were members. I have the distinct impression that any reader will know Edward Yoder better after reading this intimate journal than one could have ever known him while he lived.

This book is an intriguing window on the Mennonite Church of the thirties and forties seen through the eyes of a markedly exceptional man. He was a man fluent in the classical languages of Latin and Greek; a man who had a doctor's degree in a day when such were seldom found, much less appreciated, in the Mennonite Church; a man whom the Lord led through many difficult years to serve on the faculties of both Hesston and Goshen Colleges and finally to serve as Sunday school curriculum editor at the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, Pennsylvania. Years before, he had written: "A great grief to us it will be if it should be necessary for us to leave [Kansas]. If we must, our first choice will be to go further south, southwest, or west. The effete and decadent East, as it is spoken of, cannot attract us with anything less than a desirable job."

Seldom in over 35 years of book reviewing have I found a book so hard to review in a relatively brief manner. The book is nearly 500 large-sized pages and in the first one hundred pages alone, I listed 29 items that would bear mention in a review. His crisp characterizations of the economy in the early '30s, or his comments on technology, or the Mennonite emphasis on dress, or his keen observations on biblical interpretation, or his sharp words regarding some church leaders, or his dismay over the denominational "in house" struggles that he experienced, or his candid account of his personal spiritual pilgrimage, or his observations regarding a liberal arts education, is to mention only a random few of the variety of subjects to which he speaks with both vigor and clarity.

Edward was a man constantly maturing in his insights and judgements while he saw so many of his fellow leaders sadly arrested in their growth. He writes of successive stages of spiritual growth and then comments: "It is a great misfortune when at any one of these levels a particular group organizes itself to stan-

dardize that particular stage as orthodox religion and by insinuation, suggestion, legislation, politics, and what not, proceeds to enforce that particular stage as final. . . . And not only [are they] satisfied to live on such levels, they also regard it as their calling to conspire against those who would go forward. Their own level of spiritual achievement becomes the measure of perfection. They know they 'have arrived.' If they are dogmatic besides, they are hopeless." While we see him exemplifying commendable toleration for differences of opinion, we see him also at times expressing his exasperation with fear-some candor.

It was probably very wise for this journal not to have been published until now. Perhaps there will be sharp displeasure from some quarters that it has been published at all, but this reviewer cannot but commend Edward's sister and son for having taken the risk of sharing this treasure with a wider public. Here is a slice of life preserved with all the pungency of life as it is experienced. Granted,

much of it is bracingly subjective, and quietly recorded "with no holds barred" yet this journal represents a viewpoint that we cannot but hear with profit if we can attain unto the stature that our Lord called for so often when he closed his messages with "he that has ears to hear, let him hear." Our Lord was infallible, Edward was not, yet his tartness ought not deprive us of the gems of wisdom and insight that the passing of the years reveal.

I muse that the Church cannot possibly tolerate many such journals in a decade, but it is priceless to have a few come to light that represent the most intimate thoughts of a gifted and respected, but generally silent, man. I have known few people with this eloquence and candor, and even if I have differed sharply with them at times, I can do no other than to thank God for bringing them into my life. A heartfelt thanks to both of you, Ida and Virgil, for I consider the release of this book to the wider church to be a rare gift!

—Gerald C. Studer

Corrections to *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* compiled by Ira D. Landis

On February 17, 1961, Ira D. Landis, director of the Mennonite Historical Society of Lancaster Conference, wrote the following letter to John C. Wenger, Goshen, Indiana. The letter begins with corrections which Ira Landis thought should be made in a future reprint of the works of Menno Simons. Along with the three dozen or so corrections, Landis then appends additional subject references which he would like to see added to the index. And finally, at the very end, he notes a few discrepancies in the spelling of names. It should be noted that the idea of a textual index, which Landis refers to in his last paragraph, later found its fulfillment in a volume that incorporates the biblical references found in Menno Simons, in Dirk Philips, as well as in the English version of the Martyrs' Mirror, all of which are found in the volume: Biblical References in Anabaptist Writings, published in 1969 by Pathway Publishers, and compiled by Eldon T. Yoder and Monroe D. Hochstetler. (This volume is now out of print, although copies are to be found in the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen, and in the Archives of the Mennonite Church—as well as in other Mennonite research centers scattered

throughout North America.)

The critical notations listed below are the work of one scholar; some may well be open to question, and therefore the suggestions should be used critically.

—Leonard Gross

Bareville, R. 1, Penna.
February 17, 1961

John C. Wenger,
Goshen Indiana

Dear Bro. John C.:

Just in case there should be a reprint of *Menno Simons Complete Writings*, I would have a few corrections. Keep for such a time and then you may want to consider them.

- 57 near foot - children
- 124 second paragraph - why immersion?
- 170 I Timothy 4:12 instead of I Timothy 4:11
- 211 I Kings 19:10, 14 instead of I Kings 18
- 243 Acts 2:37, 38 instead of Acts 2:37

260 Colossians 2:11, 12 instead of Colossians 2:11
 261 John 15:16
 264 I Corinthians 12:13 instead of I Corinthians 12:15
 266 Mark 16:16; James 2:17; Titus 3:5
 267 Romans 3 & 6 instead of Romans 3 & 5
 275 Acts 8:35-37 instead of Acts 8:35
 284 Philippians 3:17-19 instead of Philippians 3
 286 Daniel 6:13 instead of Daniel 13
 296 I Samuel 15:22 instead of I Kings 15:22
 309 Matthew 28:18 instead of Matthew 28
 311 I Corinthians 3:3-9 instead of I Corinthians 1
 344 Genesis 6:13-22 instead of Genesis 7
 428 Philippians 2:6-8 instead of Philippians 2:7
 470 I Corinthians 5:6-8 instead of I Corinthians 5:7
 514 Luke 18:16 instead of Luke 18:2
 517 Revelation 17:3-5 instead of Revelation 17:3
 518 Matthew 5:34 instead of Matthew 25:34
 531 Matthew 5:7; Matthew 25:40 instead of Matthew 5:7; Matthew 25:41
 536 Sap. 1 (?)
 540 Titus 1:7-9 instead of Titus 2:9
 573 Jeremiah 26:20, 21 instead of Jeremiah 26:20
 573 Acts 9:24-25 instead of Acts 9:24
 573 I Kings 18:14-21ff instead of I Kings 17
 663 Matthew 21:40, 41 instead of Matthew 21:41
 697, 701 Mark 16:15, 16 instead of Mark 16:16
 697 Romans 6:16-23 (?) instead of Romans 6
 740 Sacraments - not Mennonite
 742 Revelation 13:5-7 instead of Revelation 13:5,6
 743 IV I John 3:18 instead of I John 3:8
 793 Wisdom 7:1 instead of Wisdom 7:3
 795 John 20:30, 31 instead of John 20
 798 John 16:28 instead of John 16:16
 798 Philippians 3:20, 21 instead of Philippians 3:20
 798 Luke 20:46, 47 instead of Luke 20

799 Revelation 1:8 instead of Revelation 1
 799 Jeremiah 23:5, 6 instead of Jeremiah 23:5
 800 Luke 1:35 instead of Luke 1
 800 Acts 9:20 instead of Acts 9
 801 Isaiah 8:14 instead of Isaiah 8
 801 Romans 9:33 instead of Romans 9
 803 John 1:1-3 instead of John 1:1
 833 I John 2:22, 23 instead of I John 2:22
 989 last expression : vs sharp detergent M.S. Works I 261b
 991 conscience
 1029 after *Menno Simons* - not a correct translation
 1046n line 6 after *folio 130-132 and in Complete Works of 1871 Part I pp. 176-178*
 1047 second full paragraph -why sworn?
Regarding Menno Simons Complete Writings, Additional:
 286 Micah 7:2-4; Ezekiel 22:3,9,12; Daniel 6:13 and not Daniel 13
 312 Galatians 1:8,9
 319 Isaiah 9:7
 364 Matthew 8:10
 368 II Peter 2:14 instead of I Peter 2
 411 Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:11-13; I Corinthians 11:26; Titus 3:5; Romans 12:1; Galatians 5:24; Matthew 15:21-28
 414 Revelation 22:11
 415 I Timothy 3:2,8; Titus 2:8,15
 515 Mark 22:22-31; Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:14-20; I Corinthians 11:17-34 (covers both I Corinthians)
 560 Matthew 19:4-6
 561 I Corinthians 6:9,10
 563 Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 5:12-21; Ephesians 5:1-18
 713 Matthew 28:19 instead of Matthew 28:29 Sirach
 750 John 8:44
 771 Genesis 1:24-28; Psalm 27:10
 773 Genesis 22:1-14; Mark 16:16
 855 Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18,19
 1041 End of Paragraph 1 does not quite make sense
 1043 Could John 5 be I Corinthians 5:9-13?
 1044 Matthew 18:15-18; James 5:19-20; Colossians 2:5-17; Ephesians 5:1-21
 1053 Matthew 6:14,15
 1056 *cripple* - Footnote should be one (2) In 1051 he is *lame*
 1062 Ezekiel 18:31,32; I Peter 4:8; James 5:20

Since Sirach is not generally called a book in the Apocrypha, why not be consistent throughout?

I would add to Index:

Apostolic Doctrine and Practice 237, 691, 713, 730, 770
 Baptism *add* 120-138, 513-516
 Baptism not at once 137
 Brotherhood 558-559
 Children, Innocent 208
 Comforting Letter . . . 1052-1054
 Dress 183, 207, 213, 314, 377, 383, 387, 390, 559, 632, 647, 658, 732, 740, 746, 747, 1027
 Eternal Security 447
 Feet Washing *add* 963
 Handful of water *add* 123n
 Hymn of . . . 1070
 Infant Baptism *add* 133, 137, 140
 Infant Baptism Ancient 695
 Judges Corrupt 367
 Kiss 81, 100, 108, 135, 429, 457, 471, 474, 511, 971
 Lot *add* 443
 Luther on Bible direction 514
 Lutherans, Impurity of 333
 Marriage 560, 561
 Marriage Sacred 561
 Martyrdom - Menno Simons' Works 191n - 193n
 Missions 189, 311, 320, 393, 527, 633
 Non-Resistance 190
 Obbe Philips left 761
 Perverting Truth 562
 Political Corruption 367
 Regeneration 87-102
 Respector, No 412
 Separate Wife 1060
 Toleration 522-531
 Triune God, Confession 491
 Backreel and Backereel on same page 25
 Dirk Philips v, 9, 15, 19, 22, 25, 488, 761, 1050, 1060
 Dirck Philips 480n, 1041n
 Sicke Freerks, p 7 on p 688 is Sicke Snijder

I am preparing a textual index, inserting all the Scriptures in *Menno Simons Complete Works* in this copy of Complete Writings. Would this have any place in a revision?

Fraternally,
 Ira D. Landis

N.B. The textual index, mentioned above, Ira Landis completed, although it apparently was never published. A copy is in the Archives of the Mennonite Church (J. C. Wenger Collection), and also probably in the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society Archives.

—Leonard Gross